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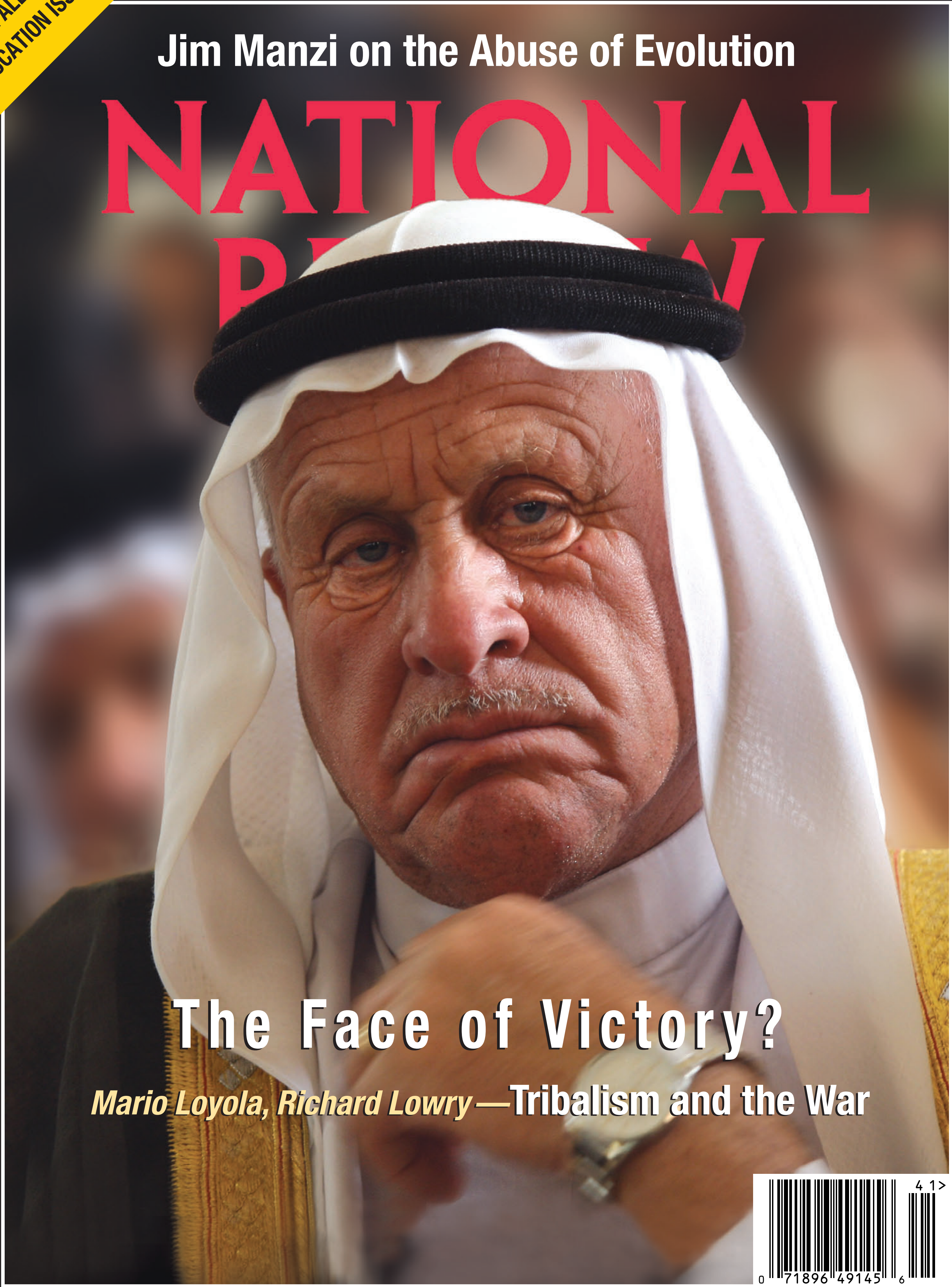
FALL EDUCATION ISSUE

Jim Manzi on the Abuse of Evolution

NATIONAL REVIEW



The Face of Victory?

Mario Loyola, Richard Lowry—Tribalism and the War

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OCTOBER 8, 2007 VOL. LIX, NO. 18

NATIONAL REVIEW

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■ COVER STORY

Return of the Sheik

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Americans in Iraq often compare tribal leaders to mafia dons, but there is an important difference. The sheiks are not often at odds with the law. They *are* the law, and today they are defending the law by force. *By Mario Loyola*

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letters to the editor

MAD HATTERS

In his review of David Gelernter's *Americanism: The Fourth Great Western Religion* ("Apologia Americana," August 13), Christopher Levenick criticizes the author on many grounds, including for ridiculing the "'spike-decorated clown hats' of the Kaiser's armies."

I would like to point out that, in 1872, the U.S. Army adopted just such "spike-decorated clown hats" as part of the cavalry's dress uniform. Ours were embellished with voluminous horse-hair plumes sprouting from the peaks of the spikes, falling to the eyebrows in front, the collar in the rear. Those monstrosities, each replete with a palm-sized crest, broad gold chain, and intricately knotted and looped yellow cord, were often criticized at the time for their cost, but not, to my knowledge, for their absurdity. They were flaunted by our mounted troops for several decades, making old photos of their formations evoke the Ruritanian Royal Guard. And we remember what Richard Nixon did to the White House guards . . .

As for the cavalry helmets, John Wayne would not have been caught dead in one.

Ralph D. Copeland
San Antonio, Tex.

HOLLYWOOD AT WAR

In the September 24 issue, you mention the barrage of upcoming films Hollywood is producing that are supposed to be attacks on the Iraq War (The Week). One of those mentioned, *Charlie Wilson's War,* is an adaptation of the book by George Crile of the same title.

The book revolves around the true story of a Democratic congressman from Texas who used his position on the House subcommittee on defense appropriations to channel money to the mujahideen in Afghanistan. Part wheeler-dealer, part Indiana Jones, Wilson comes across irresistibly, despite his vices (which include womanizing and heavy drinking). While there is some commentary about the "blowback" from assisting the Afghans, the book is mostly devoted to telling Wilson's fascinating life tale.

I don't doubt Hollywood's ability to ruin a good book, but I think it still promises to be a movie worth seeing. Charlie Wilson's devotion to a good cause and desire to see Communism defeated are worth celebrating.

Eric Keber
Alexandria, Va.

'REAL' BATTLES

Regarding Senator Obama's threat of military action against Taliban types in Pakistan, The Week observes (August 27), "Obama was looking for a way to push a liberal theme: Bush has mired us in Iraq, but we will fight the *real* battle, elsewhere." That the "real battle" is raging in Southwest Asia is, as it turns out, a theme with quite a pedigree.

In the 1880s, Gladstone sounded quite like today's Democrats when he found his country still engaged in the Sudan after the failed efforts to relieve Gen. Charles Gordon in Khartoum. Byron Farwell put it thus in *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*:

"The politicians, particularly Gladstone, wanted an excuse for withdrawing all the troops, and this was found in, of all places, the northern border of Afghanistan. It was called the Penjdeh Incident. . . . Gladstone later confessed that the Penjdeh Incident was a heaven-sent device for getting the British out of the Sudan."

Unfortunately, the British were back in the Sudan within a few years, fighting the same Mahdist army as before.

Blair Nathan
Winnetka, Ill.

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BALLOONS ARE SAVING THOUSANDS OF LIVES. AND THEY CAN SAVE EVEN MORE.

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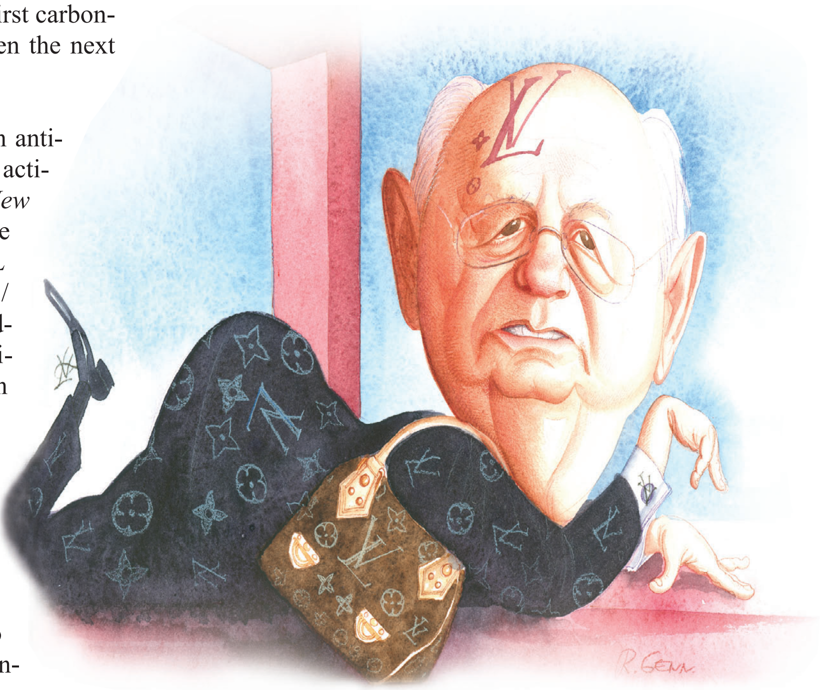
THE WEEK



See page 14

■ The Vatican has announced that it will be the first carbon-neutral state. What, no puff of white smoke when the next pope is picked?

■ Prompted by a tempting rhyme, and their own anti-military reflexes (which require no temptation to activate), MoveOn.org bought a full-page ad in the *New York Times* blasting Gen. David Petraeus on the eve of his testimony to Congress: "GENERAL PETRAEUS OR GENERAL BETRAY US? / Cooking the books for the White House," the headline and subhead cried. Rudy Giuliani's presidential committee shot back with a tough counter-ad, not only defending Petraeus but linking MoveOn.org to the Democratic party, and especially to Hillary Clinton: "Hillary Clinton continued the character attack on General Petraeus and refused to denounce MoveOn.org's ad . . . . Who should America listen to . . . A decorated soldier's commitment to defending America, or Hillary Clinton's commitment to defending MoveOn.org?" A lively sideshow concerned whether the *Times* had given MoveOn.org a discounted rate. But the main points are these: Both the Democrats and the netroots believe the war is lost and the military are shills; Democrats want netroots to do the heavy lifting, so they can preserve deniability; Rudy Giuliani loves to mix it up. Conservatives have good reason to distrust many of his instincts, but one they and he share is a laser-lock on liberal weaseling and weakness.

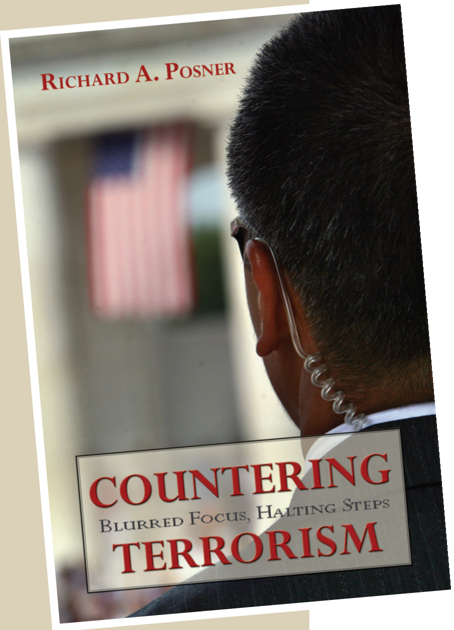
■ Only two groups of Americans need to worry about Hillary Clinton's new health plan: people who are healthy, and people who are sick. The healthy would pay higher insurance premiums, because Clinton would prohibit insurers from giving them a discount. The sick would suffer a few years after Clinton's proposal became law. Her mix of subsidies, tax hikes, and regulations does nothing to control costs—so, before too long, the government would end up imposing price controls and rationing care. (Indeed, the fine print of her plan already includes some rationing.) The public wants health-care reform, but it does not want a government takeover of health care. Republicans ought to explain to the public that, despite Clinton's assurances to the contrary, a government takeover is exactly what she has proposed.

■ Republicans keep saying that the Democrats are running a "do-nothing Congress." We wish. It is a Congress that wants to do a great deal. It has failed to do much only because it has sought to do more than many Republicans are willing to support—and thus it cannot overcome filibusters and vetoes. If Republicans choose to make congressional inaction the centerpiece of their critique of the Democrats, the latter will respond that it's the fault of Republican obstructionism, and that the solution is for voters to send more Democrats to Washington. The media will agree. A different critique would be more honest, and more effective. This Congress has tried to raise taxes, to force taxpayers to finance the killing of human embryos, to micromanage the war, and to move toward nationalized health care. It is, in short, a liberal Congress. Maybe that's what Republicans should call it.

■ Michael B. Mukasey, President Bush's nominee to be attorney general, is a well-respected former trial judge with sound views on national-security issues. Nominated by President Reagan to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York in 1987, Judge Mukasey presided over the New York trials of terrorists, including the prosecution of the jihadists who planned the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. He has forcefully defended key provisions of the Patriot Act, and appears ideally suited to handle the Justice Department's most crucial responsibilities. He will now be introduced to the ways of Washington, where his rep-

ROMAN GENN

FROM HOOVER STUDIES IN POLITICS, ECONOMICS, AND SOCIETY SERIES



Hoover Studies editors Peter Berkowitz and Tod Lindberg

Countering Terrorism

Blurred Focus, Halting Steps

RICHARD A. POSNER

"As Judge Posner's book ably demonstrates, reform of the U.S. intelligence community has a long way to go, notwithstanding the recent Intelligence Reform Act passed into law by the Congress. His analysis of 'three cultures" and the problems of domestic intelligence are especially outstanding."

—William E. Odom, Lieutenant General, U.S. Army (Ret.)

In this third book of a series on intelligence reform, Judge Richard A. Posner evaluates the measures that have been taken in the last two years to implement the Intelligence Reform Act of 2004, which decreed a wholesale reorganization of the intelligence system. *Countering Terrorism* also addresses broader issues in the struggle against terrorism, such as the failure of criminal law enforcement and the difficulty of devising criteria for allocating counterterrorist funds. Although some successes have been achieved in the effort to make our intelligence system more coherent and effective, notably with respect to intelligence analysis and "open source" intelligence, progress overall has been slow, owing in major part to the deflection of senior officials in the intelligence community from overall supervision and coordination to short-term crisis management. Of particular concern, domestic intelligence remains in serious disarray, dangerously exposing the nation to the emergent threat of homegrown, as distinct from foreign-initiated, terrorism.

Countering Terrorism is copublished with Rowman & Littlefield.

Richard A. Posner is a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago and a senior lecturer at the University of Chicago Law School. He is the author of hundreds of articles and dozens of books, including *Uncertain Shield: The U.S. Intelligence System in the Throes of Reform* (2006) and *Preventing Surprise Attacks: Intelligence Reform in the Wake of 9/11* (2005).

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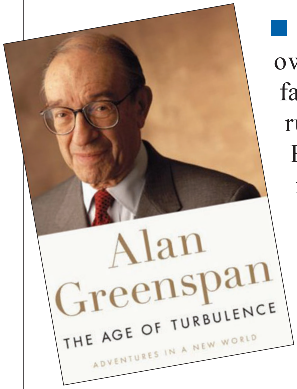
THE WEEK...

utation for integrity and independence will not spare him a confirmation ordeal. After months of posturing about the desperate need for new leadership at the Department of Justice, Senate Democrats are expected to stall his nomination in order to gain political advantage. Janet Reno was confirmed 13 days after her nomination was sent to the Senate in 1993. Democrats who so swiftly approved a wholly unqualified nominee should have to explain why Judge Mukasey hasn't already taken office.



■ Everyone sees the world through his own prism. When the country was falling apart in the winter of 1860–61, rumor had it that President James Buchanan had gone mad. The stock market rose. Alan Greenspan, former master of all markets, has written a memoir, *The Age of Turbulence: Adventures in a New World*, in which he wrote, "I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: the Iraq war was largely about oil." The quote ran round the world. Blood for oil—it seemed as if Greenspan was lining up with ANSWER and Michael Moore. In an interview with Bob Woodward, Greenspan tacked a bit: Ensuring the stability of oil supplies was "not the administration's motive" for the Iraq War, but it "would have been my motive." "Taking Saddam out," he added, "was essential." In Greenspan's defense, protecting the world's most important product from a megalomaniac is reason enough to fight. But there were others, repeatedly stressed by the president and Congress, including Saddam's fondness for tyranny, terrorists, and WMD. Meanwhile, we are saddened to acknowledge what everyone should know: Iraq coverage is largely about spin.

■ The Fed blinked, easing monetary policy to reassure markets that are jittery about a housing slump and weak jobs growth. The Fed said its action would "promote moderate growth over time." But promoting long-term growth is not something the Fed can do, and therefore not something it should try to do. What it can do is fight inflation. As the editors of the *Wall Street Journal* have observed, the inflation picture does not justify looser money. Confirming their predictions, the dollar started to fall on the Fed move. If inflation gets out of control, the Fed will have to re-tighten—and at that point we might end up with the recession it is trying to avoid. The *Journal* has doubtless faced a lot of pressure from Wall Street. Too bad Ben Bernanke didn't resist it as well.

■ Norman Hsu, the Hong Kong–born businessman who fled a prosecution for a Ponzi scheme 15 years ago, fled another prosecution for fleeing, before he was found, ill, on a train in Colorado. He now resides safely in jail. Hsu was a bundler of campaign contributions—he steered $850,000 to Hillary Clinton—though she was only the largest recipient of his largesse: Over $1 million more went to dozens of other Democratic candidates, committees, and state party organizations. It is possible that all that political access was intended to help him float other Ponzi schemes: Look who my friends are! (And give me your money.) Hsu may also have wanted to be noticed on his own account. Still, it cannot help New York's junior senator for the public to be reminded that sleazeballs always seem to find their way to someone named Clinton.

■ Former Rhode Island senator Lincoln Chafee left the party of Lincoln, changing his affiliation to independent. Could have been worse: Chafee, who fended off conservative challenger Steve Laffey in the 2006 primary, might have gotten reelected.

■ Pennsylvania governor Robert Casey was among the last of the fighting pro-life Democrats. His son, Robert Casey Jr., pledged to oppose abortion, too, during his Senate race against Rick Santorum, neutralizing the issue. Casey won. But he has just abandoned pro-lifers in a federal-funding fight. The government gives money to promote family planning overseas, but it does not give it to groups that promote or perform abortions. Casey voted with his party to allow such funding. The new senator appears to have worked out his own version of the "personally opposed" line: He'll vote against abortion, while also voting to subsidize the groups that do it.

■ Democratic presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich appeared on Syrian television to condemn the United States for its "illegal occupation" of Iraq, and he went on to praise Bashar Assad, the Syrian president, for his human-rights record. In the footsteps of every tyrant come useful idiots and apologists of this type. Illegal occupation exactly describes how Assad was manipulated into the office of president by his father's gangster clique in order to protect their looting of the country. He and his family or senior cronies are responsible for political murder and the dispatch of terrorists into Iraq. Hundreds of Kurds and scores of dissidents are in

THIS MIGHT HURT

Harry and Louise, where are you?
Hillary's proposed
Yet another diagnosis
Like the one she nosed
At us waving enema bags
Back in '93.
When she says, "Relax," remember:
This is Hillary.

—W. H. VON DREELE

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THE WEEK...

Syrian prisons, and some are tortured while others disappear. Kucinich claims to love his own country, but he betrays everything it stands for.

■ On September 18, 57 senators voted for a bill that would grant the District of Columbia a permanent seat in the House of Representatives—a privilege that the Constitution limits to "the several states." The proposal failed because it came shy of the 60 votes needed for cloture. Only one Democrat—Robert Byrd of West Virginia—opposed the measure. Eight Republicans favored it, including Norm Coleman of Minnesota, Richard Lugar of Indiana, Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, and George Voinovich of Ohio. The legislation was a partisan gambit for Democrats—few seats in the House would be safer for them than one in D.C. Worse, it was blatantly unconstitutional. If the District is to have representation in the House, there are three options: a constitutional amendment, statehood, and retrocession into Maryland. There is no other way.

■ Having lost the battle for "comprehensive" immigration reform, Sen. Dick Durbin and like-minded colleagues are now trying for amnesty on the installment plan. Durbin, the number-two Democrat in the Senate, wants to give citizenship to people who entered the country illegally before age 16 and who have completed two years of college or service in

Monaco on The Potomac

• Washington, D.C. •
SAMPLE
TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

LIVING in Washington, D.C., requires some annoying compromises. The non-specialty supermarkets are abysmal. There's a Giant Food near my house that looks like live chickens and Polish peasants should be wandering around inside. Of course, the public schools compare favorably with schools in other national capitals—Baghdad comes to mind—but are dreadful compared with other schools in America. A friend of mine once ran a painting company in San Francisco when he was younger. Its motto: "We may be slow, but we're expensive." D.C. schools should translate that into Latin and inscribe it over every door.

But, as petty as it may seem, what bothers me the most are the license plates. I have to drive around with "Taxation Without Representation" on my license plate whether I like it or not. New Hampshire has "Live Free or Die!" and I get the rallying cry of the D.C. Green party.

There's so much I can't stand about the slogan. For starters, most of the folks who think "Taxation Without Representation" is the distillation of everything unjust about D.C.'s non-state status are also the sorts of folks who think the American Revolution was a riot of hypocrisy by rich white men. They look down their noses at anybody who sees the American Revolution or the Founding as a source of moral and constitutional guidance in any other sphere of life. Their arguments for D.C. congressional voting rights and statehood (not to mention gun control) do horrible violence to the Constitution. But they just don't care. They wear T-shirts with the phrase and even sport bumper stickers repeating what's already on their license plate. They think it's clever to bebop and scat off of the perceived inconsistency between the American Founding and D.C.'s status. But actually respecting what the Constitution says? That's for suckers.

But *they* are the suckers. And that's what drives me the battiest about this whole Taxation Without Representation thing: They have a point! It *is* wrong to tax people without giving them political representation. But look: You, Dear Reader, are a rational person. Imagine you are presented with the following choice:

Option A: Continue to pay your federal taxes, but with the enormous satisfaction of having Eleanor Holmes Norton vote for you in the House of Representatives and—for the sake of argument—a couple of hacky D.C. pols representing your interests in the Senate.

Or . . .

Option B: Pay nothing in federal taxes while living in the civic hell of being "voiceless" in Washington.

Right scale: No taxes, no "voice." Left scale: Taxes, with "voice."

Am I a crazy man, or is this like the biggest no-brainer since Larry Craig asked me if I was headed to the bathroom? No taxes! What am I missing?

Sure, there would be repercussions to such a policy. Within hours of the court ruling that federal taxation of D.C. residents is unconstitutional, the nation's capital would be bought up by billionaires. But that's okay. I'd be happy to sell my house for $40 million. As for the poor, we could voucherize their stakes in their rental or public housing so they could make a buck from the transformation of D.C. into Monaco-on-the-Potomac. It would be the greatest private-sector wealth transfer in human history, a living laboratory for low-tax zealots (like me). And, I guarantee you, the supermarkets and public schools would be awesome!

—JONAH GOLDBERG

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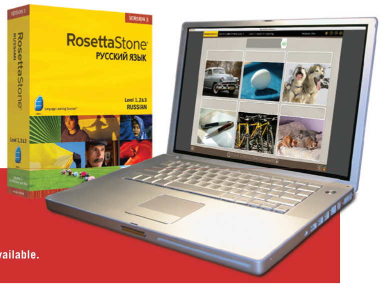

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THE WEEK...

the military. In turn, these legalized aliens would be able to sponsor their parents for citizenship. Illegal immigrants, present and future, would be eligible for discounted in-state tuition rates. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, meanwhile, is promoting legislation to grant amnesty to illegal agricultural workers, their spouses, and their children. Both measures enjoy bipartisan support. Heeding the public demand to crack down on illegal immigration is a job Washington politicians won't do.

■ The Habeas Corpus Restoration Act of 2007, brainchild of Arlen Specter and Patrick Leahy, seeks to return to federal district courts the cases of alien enemy combatants held at Guantanamo Bay. Its title is a misnomer. Habeas corpus can be suspended and restored only where a person is entitled to it in the first place. Alien enemy combatants, however, are not vested with rights under the Constitution. The 2004 *Hamdi* v. *Rumsfeld* case, which Specter has cited in support of his position, did not involve aliens at all. The greater flaw in the Specter-Leahy legislation, however, is its abdication of duty. The conduct of war—a core component of which is the handling of enemy prisoners—is a political responsibility, not a legal one. If Specter and Leahy believe the current system is unjust, they should propose an alternative. The courts do not answer to the voters whose lives are at risk. Punting the question to them is a foolish, and potentially dangerous, course.

■ For years, scientists studying everything from weather patterns to volcanic activity have been allowed limited access to images taken by spy satellites as they fly over the United States. The Department of Homeland Security would like law-enforcement officials to see them as well, for purposes of monitoring disaster-recovery efforts and possibly even tracking terrorists, as an independent panel has recommended. Now that plans to do this are underway, liberals are howling about "domestic spying" and the like. In Congress, some Democrats are asking questions—and it's true that DHS didn't adequately inform them of its intentions, as DHS secretary Michael Chertoff has publicly acknowledged. Yet civil libertarians should rest easy. The capabilities of the satellites in question are much closer to those of Google Earth than to anything imagined by the scriptwriters of *24*. The satellites won't threaten anyone's personal privacy, and they may yet make a small contribution to our national security.

■ While conservatives hold a range of views on the details of antitrust policy, they think that most mergers should be allowed to go forward. Some conservatives are especially favorable toward the proposed merger of Sirius and XM, because the companies have agreed to let consumers buy smut-free satellite-radio packages for a reduced rate. Having made this concession to social-conservative groups, the companies have made others to win over liberal organizations (for example, a promise to do educational programming). What troubles us is that all of these side agreements will have the force of federal law: The new company will be a regulated monopoly, with the merger approved on the condition that these agreements be honored. In this case, the cause of smaller government might be better served if the merger does not go through.

REUTERS

■ You know the refrain: America is in Iraq "to achieve the interests of the major corporations." "The life of all mankind is in danger because . . . the White House insists on not observing the Kyoto Accord." Noam Chomsky "spoke sober words of advice prior to the war" in Iraq, but no one listened. And "total obedience must be to the orders and prohibitions of Allah alone in all aspects of life." Confused? Why, it's everyone's favorite lefty blogger, Osama bin Laden, who released a new videotape a few days in advance of September 11. Many have found bin Laden's ramblings amusing, but it's jarring to hear the words of much of our Left flow so readily from bin Laden's mouth (we're used to hearing it the other way around). Funny as it may seem, it behooves us to remember that, though weakened, bin Laden is a danger still; all the more so when we cease to take him seriously.

■ German authorities arrested three Islamist terrorists, and are looking for at least ten others, in connection with a plot to strike multiple targets: most prominently, Ramstein Air Base and Frankfurt International Airport, critical hubs for American military operations and civilian travel. Investigators believe the terrorists were planning their attacks to coincide with the sixth anniversary of 9/11, and to dissuade the German parliament from extending its troop commitment in Afghanistan. The plot failed thanks to aggressive intelligence collection, including electronic surveillance. U.S. intelligence reportedly assisted German officials by eavesdropping on the cellphones of two suspects as they left training camps in Pakistan. Sound familiar? It's exactly the kind of monitoring that, according to national intelligence director Mike McConnell, has been undermined by the Democratic Congress's failure to act on FISA reform. The White House and Republicans forced the issue prior to Congress's summer recess, and the result was a temporary fix that will lapse in February. Our fighting forces and investigators are fully capable of winning the War on Terror. Will we let them?

■ Israel has just struck out at Syria—that's a fact—and Syria is complaining to the United Nations—that's another fact. Otherwise everything about this incident is obscure. Israeli military censorship has blocked reporting and investigation, and the rumor mill is therefore in full stride. The international press is carrying dramatic stories about two or perhaps eight aircraft overflying Syria, and commandos landed at night for purposes of laser guidance. It is plausible that the targets were missiles in transit from Iran to Hezbollah, its proxy in Lebanon, which is busily rearming to renew last year's attacks against Israel. Equally plausible, a ship from

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THE WEEK...

North Korea is alleged to have brought in nuclear materials in cargo disguised as cement. John Bolton, former U.S. ambassador to the U.N., noted on Israeli television that "it would be unusual for Israel to conduct a military operation inside Syria other than for a very high-value target, and certainly a Syrian effort in the nuclear-weapons area would qualify." Is it possible that Saddam Hussein really did smuggle weapons of mass destruction into Syria, and that the Israelis have located and destroyed them? Syrian officials are morose about what has happened, and silent about any damage done, perhaps because they are afraid that secrets might come out. Cabinet ministers in Jerusalem are also silent but looking very pleased with themselves—and that's a fact too.

VITALY BELOUSOV/ITAR-TASS

■ Once they had Potemkin villages in Russia, fake façades made to look from a distance like the real thing, and now they have Potemkin democracy. In answer to the outward prescriptions of convention, there is a prime minister, a cabinet, the Duma or parliament, and elections, but the entire apparatus is rigged to suit the president's every wish and whim, more a conjuring trick than due process. Vladimir Putin was an unknown KGB officer until out of thin air President Boris Yeltsin picked him as his successor, in return for immunity from prosecution for corruption. Viktor Zubkov was an unknown former Communist-party official, a head of collective farms and until a few days ago an inspector of money laundering. Out of the same thin air, Putin picked him as prime minister, dropping hints that Zubkov might rise from nonentity to succeed him as president within a matter of months. Next year will see presidential elections, and Putin has already served the two terms decreed by the constitution. Either Zubkov will be a puppet or a stopgap, one way or another allowing Putin to return in due course. In a move quite as openly defiant of the rule of law, Andrei Lugovoi, the KGB officer suspected of murdering Alexander Litvinenko with polonium 210 in London, is being promoted to a safe seat in the Duma, ensuring his immunity from prosecution. Potemkin democracy evidently shares the DNA of Communism.

■ "Who, or why, or which, or what, is the Akond of Swat?" wondered the poet Edward Lear. National Review readers, an exceptionally well-informed sector of the citizenry, no doubt know that the Akond was a 19th-century Muslim saint who lived in the mountains of Swat, in the far north of present-day Pakistan. Now, before Swat went Muslim back around A.D. 1000, it was Buddhist, and still today the district is rich with ancient Buddhist relics and statuary, some showing Greek influence—Swat was at the easternmost end of Alexander's conquests. This is all very irksome to the jihadist iconoclasts of today's Pakistan. Inspired no doubt by the Taliban rulers of next-door Afghanistan, who used the great stone Buddhas of Bamiyan for artillery practice back in 2001, local terrorists snuck up on some 2,000-year-old Buddhist statues carved into a rocky Swat hillside and tried to blow them up with dynamite. They didn't do a very good job, and these ancient statues are very little the worse for their encounter with Islamovandalism. It would be pleasant to think that, following this fiasco, Swat and its extraordinary heritage of Indo-Greek cultural syncretism will be left in peace for another 2,000 years . . . but that is probably too much to hope for.

■ In his first State of the Nation address, Mexico's president Felipe Calderón condemned the treatment of Mexicans living illegally in the U.S. "Mexico does not end at its borders," said the president. "Where there is a Mexican, there is Mexico," he further declared, to a standing ovation from an audience of supporters at the National Palace in Mexico City. Almost no U.S. politicians reacted to this verbal assault on our nation's sovereignty. One honorable exception was Tom Tancredo, who observed that perhaps the people of Mexico would be grateful if Calderón were to show "as much concern over the well-being of Mexicans unlucky enough to still live there as he does for the people who have successfully fled his country."

■ Deaths can be mysterious in China, not least because Chinese officialdom has a way of forgetting that anyone has died. So it was with 71-year-old Han Dingxiang, a Catholic bishop who—according to a religious-rights group—spent some 35 years in prison, labor camps, and other forms of state custody. "This name is not on our list of bishops," explained a Chinese religious-affairs bureaucrat. "We don't know this person and don't know anything about him." According to reports from his followers, Bishop Han died in police custody, and the state cremated his body six hours later. A convenient way to destroy evidence of extrajudicial murder? No one knows for sure. What we do know is that millions of Christians continue to suffer persecution at the hands of Beijing's latter-day atheist mandarins.

■ Nepal Airlines, the national carrier for the Himalayan kingdom, had a problem with one of the two Boeing 757s that are the pride of its tiny fleet. The plane was malfunctioning, and technicians were baffled. Airline executives decided to try a faith-based approach. Reasoning that they must somehow have incurred the displeasure of Akash Bhairab, the Hindu sky god, they sacrificed two goats on the tarmac in front of the plane. That seemed to do the trick: The plane later took off and flew to Hong Kong with no further mishaps. The blogger who calls himself Galloping Beaver came up with a headline we shall not attempt to improve upon: "Akash Bhairab is My Co-pilot."

■ October 4, 2007, marks precisely 50 years since the launch of *Sputnik*, the first man-made object to achieve earth orbit. The staticky beepings of *Sputnik* (technically, *Sputnik 1*—there were 40 subsequent *Sputniki*) fell upon American ears

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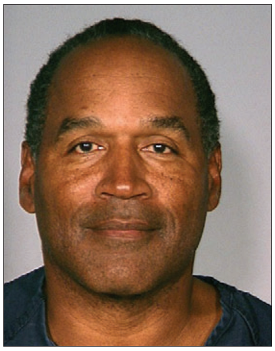
like thunderclaps, triggering a crisis of national self-confidence. The Space Race was under way. NASA was created; so was DARPA (the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which later brought forth the Internet); so were New Math, the arts of modern Systems Analysis and Project Management, and many other now-familiar features of the pedagogic, technological, political, military, and managerial landscapes. America's first attempt to emulate the *Sputnik* launch, recorded for a national TV audience in December 1957, rose four feet into the air before exploding. This failure inspired John F. Kennedy's talk of a "missile gap" and helped propel Kennedy to the White House. A simple two-foot sphere of polished aluminum weighing 184 pounds, *Sputnik* was the most striking achievement of the Soviet command economy, fortifying the ideas of those like John Kenneth Galbraith, who believed that the economic potentials of capitalism and Communism, suitably managed, might be convergent. Much has happened this 50 years; much has been learned.


GETTY

■ The story of O. J. Simpson's arrest on a charge of armed robbery is a bit hard to follow. Simpson and five acquaintances entered a Las Vegas hotel room occupied by three dealers of memorabilia. Simpson says he was reclaiming possessions of his that had been stolen and fenced (many of them were sports items, but one was the suit he wore the day he was acquitted for murdering Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman). One of the dealers says Simpson and armed cronies barged into the hotel room "commando style" and ordered them to pack the possessions up. "Nobody was roughed up," Simpson said in self-defense. Well, that's all right then. Nothing may come of it—one of the dealers has changed his story already—except yet another vignette of a dim star with compliant friends and no impulse control. Lucky no one in Vegas was married to him.

■ The Jewish New Year was brightened by Madonna, who toasted it in Jerusalem with Israeli president Shimon Peres and declared herself an "ambassador for Judaism." The lady, as her given name suggests, is not a born Jew, though she has become a devotee of Kabbalah. Well, she has better legs than Philip Roth and she is undoubtedly a tougher negotiator than Shimon Peres, so who are we to squawk?

■ You know you have a dim view of Larry Summers when even his Harvard-based persecutors think you've gone too far. Such is the case with the professorial rabble at the University of California–Davis. Some of them recently circulated a petition asking the UC system's board of regents to rescind its invitation to Summers to address a gathering of said board. Summers, the petition claimed, "has come to symbolize gender and racial prejudice in academia." This was too much even for Judith Ryan, the Harvard professor who led the campaign to oust Summers as the university's president. She told the *Harvard Crimson* that the UC professors "have fallen prey to a simplification that became widespread in media reports. . . . When all is said and done, we should be able to listen to views with which we don't agree, and to debate them in a civil way." Well, obviously—though Professor Ryan didn't follow her own advice in the first instance. And the UC regents haven't either: They caved to their tenured herd and disinvited Summers. So, the UC system, always plagued by silliness, has just become a little more debased.

■ The fair state of Washington seems to be a center of academic "diversity" busyness. Washington State University in Pullman employs a Chief Diversity Officer with a staff of 55 and a budget of $3 million. Over on the other side of the Evergreen State, the University of Washington in Seattle boasts a "Q center" whose mission is "to create an inclusive and celebratory environment for people of all sexual orientations." The center has just been blessed with a gift of $1 million from former professional football player David Kopay, who is gay. The gift, gushed Jennifer Self, director of the center, is "a clear directive to the UW regarding the health and well-being of its glbttsqqi students, faculty, and staff." Its *what* students, faculty, and staff? UW's Office of News and Information explained helpfully that the abbreviation (whose lower case we have faithfully reproduced) stands for "gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit, queer, questioning and intersex." Very interesting; but will it survive a challenge in Scrabble?

■ Who is a poster boy for the new Louis Vuitton ad campaign, along with Steffi Graf, Andre Agassi, and Catherine Deneuve? Who but Mikhail Gorbachev, former general secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev sits in a limo, Vuitton satchel at his side, riding past the Berlin Wall. "The bourgeoisie," wrote Marx and Engels in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), "produces . . . its own gravediggers." Communism, it seems, produced its gravediggers too, who were, in this case, more efficient. What might Osama endorse, if the martyr's crown escapes him?

■ Luciano Pavarotti has been called many things: "The King of the High C's"; "The Voice of the Century"; the most popular opera singer in history. He has also been called a few names: "schlockmeister," for one. The people who really know his worth are his fellow singers, and they are all but unanimous. They marvel at his technique, which they call unrivaled; and they marvel at his sound, which they call unforgettable. He sometimes seemed a bumpkin, but that was only an appearance: He was a musician of formidable powers, including mental ones. Pavarotti made some bad mistakes. The worst thing he ever did in his professional life was to lip-synch a concert—a shocking betrayal in the classical

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world. And speaking of betrayals: He dumped his wife, Adua, after some 40 years of marriage. He married his current secretary, which was a departure for him: He usually just had affairs with them. But the memory of his failings will fade, and his recordings will remain. They will forever tell the story. Toward the end of his career, he grew lazier, and, it's true, he could be schlocky. But he did some astounding singing, even in this late period. When someone dies, we often say that the world is poorer. And sometimes it is especially true—it is in this case. He was a phenomenon, a *primo tenore assoluto*, the Caruso of our times. Luciano Pavarotti died in his hometown, Modena, Italy, at 71, on September 6. R.I.P.

AT WAR

Progress Report

Gen. David Petraeus gave his September progress report on the surge to Congress. For months, Democrats had hoped that political support for the war would collapse after his report. Instead, he and Amb. Ryan Crocker gave a sober account of clear military progress and the realistic possibility of eventual political improvements to help make it stick. Their testimony bought more time for President Bush.

Bush instantly endorsed Petraeus's recommendation for a drawdown of roughly 5,700 troops by December, toward a goal of withdrawing all the additional troops who were part of the surge by July. That drawdown would bring us from the current 160,000 to 130,000. Starting the withdrawals by December is not ideal and increases our risks on the ground, but Petraeus likely was placating the Joint Chiefs, who are protective of the institutional interests of the services and blanch at the strain the Iraq War has put on the military. Bush emphasized that the troop withdrawals would be based on conditions in Iraq, and Petraeus wisely counseled that any plan for withdrawal beneath 130,000 be put off until next March, since we are involved in a dynamic, unpredictable war.

The indicators of progress on the security front in Iraq are undeniable, although Petraeus was accused of using "cooked statistics." A war zone isn't exactly an MIT statistics class, so reliable numbers are hard to come by. But figures from American, Iraqi, and private sources all show a decline in violence. Petraeus was said to ignore Sunni-on-Sunni and Shiite-on-Shiite violence in his figures, but he included them in the category of total civilian deaths, which have declined (he excluded them from the count of sectarian killings, which is obviously correct). He was also bizarrely (and falsely) accused of counting as sectarian murders only bodies found shot in the front of the head, not in the back.

Critics of the war tend to dismiss the military progress as inevitable—we always knew, they say, that adding troops would increase security. When Bush announced the surge at the beginning of the year, of course, the tenor of their comments suggested otherwise. They also say that the military progress won't be sustainable without political progress, a commonplace endorsed by both Petraeus and Crocker.

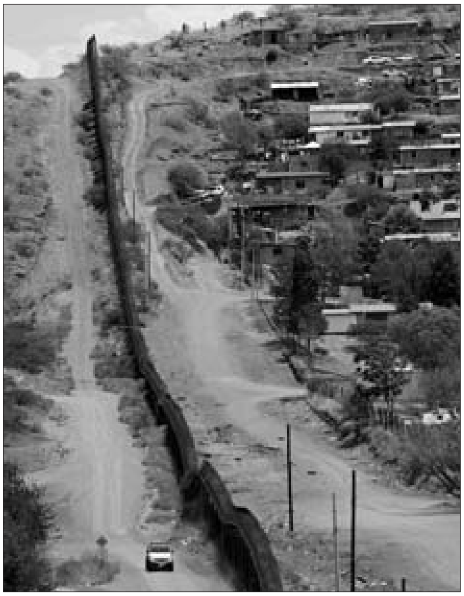
What the critics ignore is that the tribal revolt that has so improved our situation in Anbar and elsewhere *is* political progress. Sunnis in those places are siding with us rather than the insurgency. This shift in allegiances has made it possible to achieve some of the intended effects of the key political "benchmarks" without their being legislated by the Iraqi parliament. An amnesty law was supposed to ease Sunni fighters out of the insurgency; the tribal shift has led them from the insurgency in droves even in the absence of a law. A de-Baathification law was supposed to reintegrate Sunnis into Iraqi institutions; many of the Sunnis leaving the insurgency have been joining the Iraqi Security Forces. An oil law was supposed to spread revenue to Sunni areas; the central government has passed no such law but has just sent $107 million in aid to Anbar.

What the critics ignore is that the tribal revolt that has so improved our situation in Anbar and elsewhere is *political progress. Sunnis in those places are siding with us rather than the insurgency.*

Iraq has just begun to step back from a horrific civil war. Expecting action within months on complex legislation with constitutional implications—as contemplated in our benchmarks—was obviously unrealistic. But a rough accommodation among Iraq's groups that will stabilize the Iraqi state is still possible over time.

How fast we can bring troops home depends on when Iraqi security forces can take on more of the fight. Democrats brandished a commission report on the Iraqi Security Forces prepared under the direction of retired general Jim Jones. They cited its assessment that "the ISF will be unable to fulfill their essential security responsibilities independently over the next 12-18 months." This comment is true, and not surprising. The Iraqi military was designed as a light infantry capable of quickly getting into the fight and dependent on our logistics. But the report also said, "There is evidence to show that the emerging Iraqi soldier is willing to fight against the declared enemies of the state," and "that substantial progress can be achieved" within the next 18 months.

President Bush's goal is to get to January 2009 with Iraq in decent enough shape that the next president, too, will be able to maintain troops there. This is portrayed by his critics as handing the whole problem off to his successor so that he doesn't have to make hard choices himself. But it's not as though the course he is on—pushing back against the Democratic majority in Congress, wobbly Republicans, and a hostile press corps as he sees the war through—were easy. We have several strategic objectives in Iraq—to rout al-Qaeda, to prevent the country's takeover by Iran, and to establish an Iraqi government that is an ally and can defend itself. Petraeus and Crocker made a compelling case that these objectives still can be achieved. The attempt is the only responsible course.



Republicans are on either side of the immigration fence.

JEFF TOPPING/REUTERS

■ PUBLIC POLICY ■

Getting Immigration Right

A headache and a half for the GOP

RAMESH PONNURU

IMMIGRATION poses a serious political problem for Republicans. The problem isn't that it deeply divides them—although it does. It's that neither side in the intra-party debate has a viable political strategy for dealing with immigration.

Each side thinks it does, of course. George W. Bush has followed a pretty consistent strategy in Texas and Washington. It has been to court Hispanic voters, and even more to avoid alienating them. He has rarely made a peep against racial preferences or official bilingualism, and has always advertised his support for high immigration levels. Since 2004, he has also supported what he calls "comprehensive immigration reform." It has three parts: tougher enforcement of the immigration laws; a guest-worker program to reduce employers' demand for illegal-immigrant labor; and a "path to citizenship" for those illegal immigrants who have been here for a while and are willing to meet certain conditions, such as learning English.

This strategy assumes that the public at large would reward Republicans for solving the problem of illegal immigration, and doing so in a bipartisan way. It further assumes that the path to citizenship would especially please Hispanics, and that they would therefore reward Republicans for delivering it—or, at least, that they would stop regarding Republicans as anti-Hispanic and thus give them a hearing. At this point, the "natural conservatism" of Hispanic immigrants would come into play, and their religious devotion, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to their families would lead them to vote Republican.

This strategy has the support of President Bush, presidential candidates John McCain and Rudolph Giuliani, the recent heads of the Republican National Committee, the editors of the *Wall Street Journal* and several other well-known conservative journalists, many professional Republican operatives, and some conservative think-tankers. Let's call them the comprehensivists, and their opponents the restrictionists.

As proof that their strategy works, the comprehensivists point to exit polls that showed Bush getting 44 percent of the Hispanic vote in 2004. That figure was, however, debunked within a month of the election. The pollsters had overestimated Bush's support among Texas Hispanics by 10 points. NBC News lowered its national estimate to 40 percent. The Velazquez Institute did a survey that found that only 35 percent of Hispanics had supported Bush.

If Bush got 40 percent in 2004, or even close to it, he still did pretty well. Bob Dole got 21 percent of Hispanic votes in 1996, and Bush got 35 percent in 2000. In both the 2000 and 2004 elections, then, Bush appears to have increased his party's share of the Hispanic vote. Nor was this improvement a mere reflection of the party's general revival from the Dole doldrums. The Republicans increased their share of the Hispanic vote more than they increased their overall vote (again, if Bush got around 40 percent of Hispanics in 2004).

The restrictionists don't give Bush enough credit for this real success. But they make several valid observations about why the comprehensivist strategy is unlikely to help Republicans.

First, it outrages many conservatives. (I trust that anyone who watched the debate over the Senate immigration bill earlier this year does not need me to cite any evidence on this point.)

Second, it also offends some swing voters. There were dueling polls on the immigration bill. The results depended a great deal on the wording of the polls, which is usually a sign that the public does not have detailed policy views but rather has conflicting impulses. These impulses include concern about high levels of illegal immigration, and indeed of immigration generally; a desire that immigrants be treated fairly and humanely; and a distrust of Washington's ability to address the public's concerns satisfactorily. The mixed poll results, and the skittishness of the Democrats about comprehensive reform—they manifestly wanted Republican votes for it to give them cover—suggest that some swing voters disliked comprehensive reform. We can surmise that downscale, socially conservative voters in the Midwest, whom both parties heavily courted in the last several elections, are likely to be in their number.

Third, because of the two preceding points, the comprehensivists couldn't deliver. The more they have pressed comprehensive reform, the more hostile to it the bulk of the Republican party has gotten. At the outset, a majority of House Republicans opposed it; then a majority of Senate Republicans did; and now all of the top Republican presidential candidates are moving away from it. (Even Giuliani, who endorses it in outline, opposed the Senate bill and places much more rhetorical emphasis than Bush on enforcement.)

The restrictionists avoid the comprehensivists' mistakes in favor of new ones all their own.

The effort to win passage drove some voters away from the Republicans; the failure to win it drove away others. And since the bill failed, the public did not reward Republicans for doing something about illegal immigration, either.

Fourth, executing the comprehensivist strategy is guaranteed to cause some of the very difficulties with Hispanics that it is meant to reduce. The comprehensivists believe that Republican anti-immigration fervor drives Hispanic voters away from the party, which is a reasonable assumption. But by raising the issue, the comprehensivists also raised the platform for Tom Tancredo. It was entirely predictable that in a debate over immigration, most of the hostility to immigration would come from the Republican side.

Fifth, and perhaps most important, the comprehensivist strategy involves increasing the number of Hispanic voters, which would almost certainly hurt the GOP. The Republicans aren't anywhere close to getting an actual majority of the Hispanic vote. And there is every reason to think that Hispanic newcomers will be less inclined to the Republicans than long-settled Hispanic citizens: that they will be lower-income, less assimilated, and more easily organized on the basis of their ethnic group and immigrant status. Worse, the additional newcomers probably retard assimilation even further.

Republicans cannot count on their "natural conservatism." To the extent this natural conservatism exists, it has few contemporary political implications. Most people throughout history have been hardworking and religious without being conservatives in the modern American sense. Hispanics are not more favorable to free markets than other voters: quite the contrary. It is true that they are slightly more conservative than non-Hispanic whites on some moral questions, in particular abortion. But blacks are more pro-life than either group, and the influence of this fact on our politics is undetectable.

I'm not saying that our immigration policy should be determined by the needs of the Republican party. But the likelihood that higher levels of immigration will lead to fewer Republican victories considerably weakens the strength of the comprehensivists' political argument. (Merely pointing out this likelihood was, however, enough to get my colleague David Frum a demerit from *The American Prospect* for "thinly-veiled racism.")

The restrictionists avoid the comprehensivists' mistakes in favor of new ones all their own. Because the restrictionists currently have the momentum within the Republican party, it is their errors that are proving the most consequential right now.

In recent weeks, Mitt Romney has attacked Rudy Giuliani for making New York a "sanctuary city" for illegal immigrants and Giuliani has hit back at Romney for letting some cities in Massachusetts offer sanctuary while he was governor. Giuliani went too far as mayor to roll out an official welcome mat to illegal immigrants. But the core of his policy was sensible. The city has a lot of illegal immigrants, and the city government needed them to be willing to report crimes or seek medical attention, which many of them would not be if it meant deportation. The exchange between the candidates suggests that some Republicans are making a fetish out of toughness on immigration.

Newt Gingrich, in the same period, seized on an incident in Newark, N.J., in which three college students were killed, execution-style, and one of the suspects was an illegal immigrant. "There is a war here at home," wrote Gingrich, "and it is even more deadly than the war in Iraq and Afghanistan." He declared himself "sickened" that Washington was on vacation "while young Americans in our inner cities are massacred." The policy Gingrich advocated—creating a system to check whether felons are in this country legally, and to deport them if not—sounds like a good idea. But only a few Republicans have to adopt such hyperbolic rhetoric for Hispanic voters to reach an understandably negative view of the GOP.

A lot of restrictionists are eager to end the practice of treating the children of illegal immigrants, born here, as citizens. This crusade is about as politically counterproductive as they come. It will pit restrictionists against children. And even in the unlikely event it succeeded, it would be (wrongly, in my view) struck down by the courts.

The House races in Arizona last year showed the dangers of going too far in a restrictionist direction. Congressman J. D. Hayworth opposed amnesty vociferously, and lost his bid for reelection after his share of the Hispanic vote dropped substantially. That wasn't a mere reflection of the Republicans' generally weak performance. Jeff Flake, an Arizona congressman who backed amnesty, didn't see his Hispanic backing drop much, and won reelection.

If the restrictionists do not succeed in reducing immigration levels, meanwhile, Republicans will still face a tide of new Democratic voters—but voters who will be even more Democratic than they would otherwise have been because the Republicans had tried to keep them out.

Republicans are, in short, in a very difficult political bind, and it is not easy to see a way out. It would help if comprehensivists took the idea of passing a grand bill off the table. They ought to scale back their ambitions. Restrictionists, meanwhile, need to scale back their rhetoric—and start making the case that limits on immigration would serve the interests of immigrants and native-born Americans alike.

The comprehensivists say that Republicans can't alienate Hispanics; the restrictionists say that more immigration will hurt the party. The political problem for Republicans is that they're both probably right. **NR**

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■ 2008

Amateur Hour?

Fred Thompson, an old pro, has had lots of campaign growing pains

DAVID FREDDOSO

The great hope and fear that conservatives feel about Fred Thompson is best summed up in the words of one Washington activist who has not yet chosen his presidential candidate: "I want to believe," he says. "But is there anything there?"

Conservatives were waiting for someone to save them from a field of top candidates they found uninspiring. Fred Thompson, an actor and former senator from Tennessee, seemed to fit the bill. It was no surprise when he got a bounce in both state and national polls immediately upon his September 5 entry into the race.

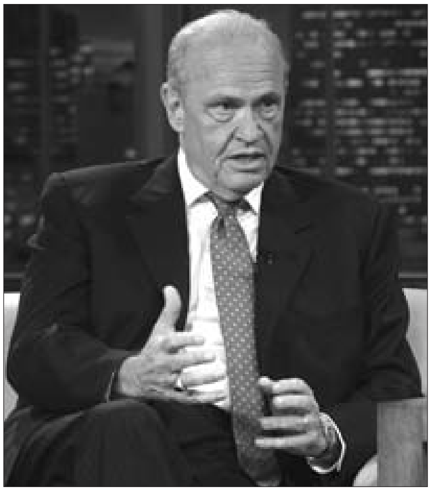
The demand for a "Fred" is clearly there, but what of the supply? The campaign was not pretty in its first two weeks. Most of the "Fred-lines" in the newspapers have been bad, revolving around heavy staff turnover and controversy over three of his old lobbying clients. Inexplicably, this elementary opposition research was buried until now, not leaked and preemptively defused months ago.

But worst of all, candidate Thompson often seems unprepared. He may have been wise to wait an extra month or two before entering the race, but he does not appear to have used the time to prepare for even obvious questions he was sure to face.

In August, Thompson's campaign hired Jim Mills—a Fox News producer with no previous involvement in Republican politics. Mills was to shape a creative, unconventional campaign for Thompson—the kind that would have sent its candidate to make a last-minute appearance at the September debate in New Hampshire, to upstage the other candidates and win favor with Granite State voters; the kind that might have disclosed its donations instantly online, embracing transparency and highlighting Hillary Clinton's felon fundraiser.

But days after being hired, Mills was gone, and it isn't that hard to see why. Thompson doesn't need an artist right now—he needs a drill sergeant. Time is running short, and creativity can hardly solve Thompson's frequent episodes of message confusion. Before he can get fancy, Fred has to start getting it right.

No one should have been surprised that, while visiting Florida, Thompson would be asked about Terri Schiavo, the disabled Floridian whose husband wanted to remove her feeding tube in early 2005. Was Congress right to pass a law in an attempt to save her life? After noting that he generally favors local control, Thompson answered that, as for this particular case, "I don't remember the details." Did no one think to brief him on this? A campaign spokesman declined to talk about the candidate's briefings.



Making it official on The Tonight Show

PAUL DRINKWATER

Same-sex marriage is now a key issue in all-important Iowa, where a state judge issued a ruling in August requiring its recognition. Yet Thompson's view on the matter has been a work in progress all year long. In June, he met privately with leaders from the Arlington Group, a coalition of social-conservative organizations, and left them with the impression that he supported the Federal Marriage Amendment, which would ban state- and federal-government recognition of same-sex marriages. In an August 17 interview with CNN's John King, he said "yes" when asked whether he supported "a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage." That same day, though, his campaign released an unattributed statement to NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE saying that "Fred Thompson does not support a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage," but that, "if necessary, he would support a constitutional amendment prohibiting states from imposing their laws on marriage on other states." In a September 8 appearance in Sioux City, the candidate moved the ball a few more yards: "My amendment," he said, would ensure only that "judges could not impose this on the federal or state level unless a state legislature signed off on it," and that states need not bless other states' same-sex marriages. Thompson's spokesman confirms that this is his final answer.

On campaign finance, too, there was confusion. In March, Thompson had a perfectly acceptable conservative answer on his support for McCain-Feingold in 2002: It had been a mistake. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, he threw his hands up in the air, admitted that the law had not worked as intended, and suggested that maybe Congress should just repeal it, and even go further in loosening campaign restrictions. But in a September 7 interview on Laura Ingraham's radio show, he suddenly began defending the bill. On a conservative radio show whose listeners loathe McCain-Feingold, he discussed the evils of "soft money" and downplayed the importance of the bill's controversial restrictions on free speech in campaign ads, as if this central component had been a last-minute addition against his wishes. "They added on something that was a mistake," he said. But Thompson had come out of retirement and defended that specific provision in a 2003 brief before the Supreme Court.

Given this track record of message miscues, it was much easier for pundits to pounce on Thompson—unfairly—for saying that Osama bin Laden is "more symbolism than anything else," and that his capture is less important than that of al-Qaeda terrorists plotting within the U.S.

Whether the "lazy" rap on Thompson is fair or not, his unpreparedness gives it currency. So does his light campaign schedule. Candidates took the day off the campaign trail to commemorate the September 11 attacks, but Thompson took two days. (He had not been in the race for a full week yet.) The *New York Times* asserted that Thompson's schedule had been "sparse." The campaign disputes this, promising

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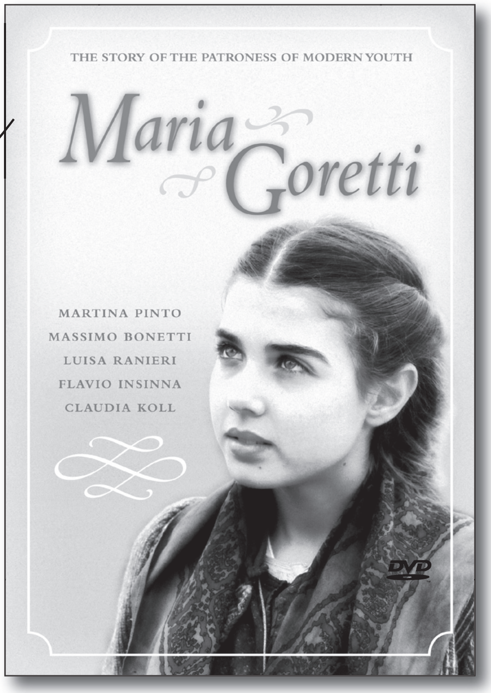
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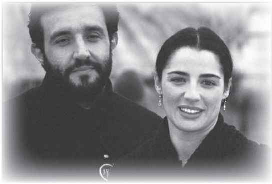

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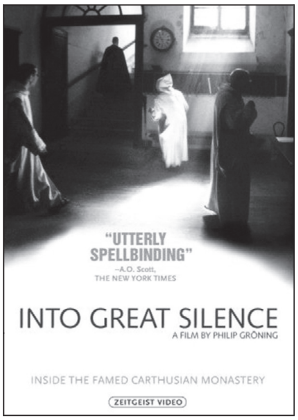
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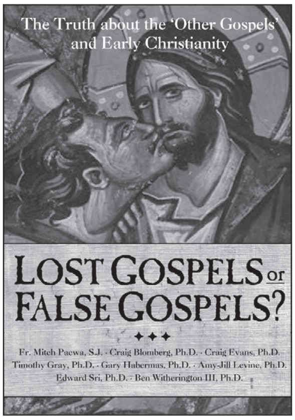
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ignatius press P.O. Box 1339, Ft. Collins, CO 80522 **1 (800) 651-1531** more events as more staff are hired. After his midnight announcement on *The Tonight Show*, Thompson flew to Iowa for three events. On September 7, he scheduled two stops. On September 8, he had a morning event in Cedar Rapids and a noon event in Davenport before heading to New Hampshire. In South Carolina on September 10, he made just two stops, in Greenville and Columbia; a stop in Charleston had been canceled.

This is a slow start for a late presidential campaign that needs to change the map radically. Mitt Romney once did eight Iowa events in one day, and he routinely does six.

Another big distraction for the Thompson campaign has been its staff turnover, but this may actually be the one problem he has solved. The most plausible explanation of the last month's staff turmoil is that the first wave of exits stemmed from the dominance of Jeri Thompson, the candidate's wife. The second wave was meant to correct that problem, giving campaign manager Bill Lacy firm control of operations.

Some campaign shakeups are positive. Thompson's senior staff appears fairly stable now, although one seasoned communications staffer, Robert Traynham, is expected to depart soon. But the greater worry is about the candidate himself. Some people are quietly comparing him to Wesley Clark, the bumbling general who came late to the 2004 race with plenty of hype and little understanding of issues. He made hilarious pronouncements, such as his memorable position on abortion: "Life begins with the mother's decision."

Even if he is stumbling, Thompson is no Wesley Clark. He did spend eight years in the Senate and voted on most key issues. He's also a real politician and not an amateur. He ran a tough race in his first election, coming back from a 20-point deficit to win the Senate seat over Rep. Jim Cooper in 1994.

Asked why Thompson, like Clark, waited so long to get into the race, one adviser says that months ago the candidate "wasn't ready for the debates." Because he skipped the forum in New Hampshire on September 5, Thompson will first meet his rivals in Dearborn, Mich., on October 9. A strong showing could allay the doubts assailing his nascent campaign. A weak performance could put it to a quick end.

Is he ready? "Oh, yeah, you bet he is," this adviser says. And he'd better be. **NR**

■ **2008 II**

Comes the FairTax

The latest in the push for saner, more effective taxation in the United States

MARK HEMINGWAY

THE biggest success story of the 2008 Republican primary season isn't about a candidate. It's about an issue: FairTax, a proposal that would eliminate income taxes outright and replace them with a national sales tax. From relative obscurity a year ago, the FairTax campaign has come to dominate Republican politics at the grassroots level, especially in battleground states like Iowa, where the GOP's state chairman has said, "The most important economic reform Congress can enact to win the fight against poverty is the FairTax."

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Neal Boortz, exhorting

ROMAN GENN

Implementing FairTax would, in short, throw the existing tax code out the window and replace it with a national sales tax. Given that most Americans hate the IRS with the heat of a thousand suns, it's surprising only that a proposal to completely overhaul the American tax system hasn't caught fire earlier on the campaign trail. But now, FairTax is smoking.

It broke into primetime in August, at ABC News's Iowa Republican debate, when moderator George Stephanopoulos offered a bullet-point summary of the FairTax proposal and asked each candidate his position on it. Mike Huckabee was the sole candidate to fully embrace the FairTax proposal, which is part of the Iowa GOP platform and remains wildly popular there. Later that month, Huckabee stunned observers by finishing second in the Ames, Iowa, straw poll, even though he had limited resources and rented no buses to drive supporters to the poll. (By contrast, Mitt Romney had spent a sizable fortune wooing and busing supporters to vote for him.)

Of course, just because something is a popular issue in the Iowa fishbowl doesn't mean that it will be an important electoral issue in the long run. However, the FairTax issue doesn't appear poised to go away anytime soon. Ken Hoagland, the communications director of Americans for Fair Taxation (AFT), points out that his organization, devoted exclusively to pushing the plan, has signed up over 800,000 supporters—more than half of them in the last six months. FairTax is a frequent topic on talk radio, and popular radio personality Neal Boortz has been flogging the issue like a stubborn mule. FairTax is even slowly seeping into Washington. Boortz co-authored a book making the case for FairTax with Rep. John Linder, a Georgia Republican. The FairTax Act of 2007, awaiting committee hearings, has 64 co-signers, and that number has been growing steadily.

As the FairTax proposal has attracted supporters, it has also gained detractors. The proposal itself is enticing: abolish all federal taxes on personal and corporate income, gifts, estates, and capital gains, along with the Social Security, Medicare, self-employment, and Alternative Minimum taxes; dismantle the IRS; repeal the 16th Amendment, which allows the federal government to levy an income tax; and still draw the same federal revenues. But substantive criticism of the FairTax has come from both the right and the left.

To fill the government coffers, FairTax supporters propose a 30 percent national sales tax. Putting 30 percent taxes on new homes and cars could be withering. FairTax proponents respond that removing the hidden taxes inherent in the construction materials or car parts, along with making the creation of wealth tax-free, will result in lower prices for the finished products that would more than make up the difference.

But if FairTax is indeed a bad idea, it's not an ill-considered one. Texas construction magnate Leo E. Linbeck Jr., the chairman of AFT, claims to have sunk over $20 million in academic and market research while formulating the FairTax plan. If you have a criticism of their proposal, chances are the group has a substantial rebuttal posted on its website. The plan has been endorsed by dozens of economists including Bob McTeer, former president of the Dallas Federal Reserve Bank.

Whatever the plan's substantive problems, there is also the political problem of selling a total tax overhaul in a presidential campaign that subsists mostly in soundbites. Indeed, a NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE editorial recently advised the Republican contenders to avoid latching onto the issue: "There are too many possible lines of attack, and it would take too long to explain the issues."

To date the most notable and vocal critic of AFT and its FairTax plan has been Bruce Bartlett, the deputy assistant secretary of the treasury during the elder George Bush's presidency. Of the many lines of attack available to a trained economist such as Bartlett, he's chosen an unusual one: an attack on its proponents' credibility. According to pieces he has published in the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New Republic*, the idea of a national sales tax to replace the IRS was originally floated by the Church of Scientology.

It is a complicated tale. In 1967, the Church of Scientology lost its tax-exempt status after an IRS audit. A number of Scientologists then infiltrated the IRS and stole documents pertaining to the church in what was termed "Operation Snow White." Eleven high-ranking Scientologists—including the wife of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard—served time in federal prison as a result. Scientology did not regain tax-exempt status until 1993, shortly after the group began pushing for a national sales tax to replace the IRS. If anybody has an axe to grind with the IRS, Scientology is Paul Bunyan. And AFT's former executive director, Tom Wright, is a well-known Scientologist.

The taint of Scientology doesn't address the substance of FairTax's proposal, of course. A good idea is a good idea. For their part, AFT's executives deny there's any meaningful Scientology connection. The Scientology proposal for a national sales tax, championed by a now-defunct group called Citizens for an Alternative Tax System, was relatively unsophisticated and lacked the economic rigor of the FairTax. Hoagland puts it this way: "Apparently they did have a proposal, but one might as well say that the Space Shuttle finds its genesis in a flying fish. There are a lot of people who hate the income tax. Scientologists are apparently some of them." Indeed, one suspects that Tom Cruise's star would still be burning brightly had he used his Scientological fervor to attack the tax code rather than psychiatry.

Under the leadership of Wright, the FairTax movement appeared to be hitting a wall, and there were grumblings on Capitol Hill that his overt Scientology was keeping people at arm's length from the issue. After his departure last fall, FairTax hired David

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Polyansky as its chief operating officer and Mike Rose as its national director of grassroots. Polyansky, a Marine who took the job shortly after returning from Iraq's Anbar Province, has a grab bag of political experience; Rose is a veteran campaign guy. The two joined forces with Hoagland, and their political strategy ever since has been nothing short of masterful.

"Our thought from Day One was to go into these early primary states and organize them like a campaign," Rose says. "Start with state chairmen and then go in and create county chairmen, and make sure it's as nonpartisan as possible. Then organize it the way a campaign would, so if there's a rally going on we know who to call on the ground to organize it and how many people to expect beforehand."

Thus a gleaming FairTax campaign bus has been driving around the country, appearing to huge crowds and piggybacking on candidate events, as the issue has been brought into the political consciousness. But time will tell if support for the specific FairTax proposal is real, or if there are merely hundreds of thousands of Americans happy to see somebody—anybody—suggesting comprehensive tax reform. "We think at worst we will force a debate on the federal income-tax system. At best we will drive this to the floor of the House and Senate. Anywhere in that spectrum is healthy for the country," Hoagland says.

For now, Hoagland and AFT remain enthusiastic about the issue. "There aren't that many moments in American history where the public will actually dominates the public-policy process, but it does happen from time to time. It's what makes you believe in what you learn in civics class: that it is a nation by and for the people. Usually it's not," Hoagland says. "There are so many benefits across the board under the FairTax that we think we can unite the country, get past the polarization that so beleaguers the country, and unite Democrats and Republicans against the self-dealing of Congress."

Hoagland may be getting ahead of himself when he speaks of the potential of FairTax to heal a divided nation. Still, his lofty words go a long way to explaining the organization's recent success. The jury may still be out on whether the FairTax is sound policy, but for the time being its promoters have a great stump speech. **NR**

■ CULTURE WATCH

Me Conservative, Me Stupid

Or at least rigid and habit-bound, says 'the science'

JONAH GOLDBERG

'Back off, man, we're scientists!" That's Bill Murray in *Ghostbusters*, but it might as well be David Amodio of NYU. I appeared with him on a San Francisco public-radio program, *Forum*. His basic argument was, "I'm a scientist, I deal with facts," while Mr. Goldberg is a pundit who peddles "fictions." This scientific principle is also known as "I'm right, you're wrong! Nyah! Nyah!"

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Amodio is the lead author of a study that received the sort of coverage you'd expect if scientists discovered that embryonic stem cells can cure breast cancer, reverse global warming, and prove that George W. Bush stole the 2000 election.

Okay, not quite, but coverage of the study—"Neurocognitive Correlates of Liberalism and Conservatism," published in the journal *Nature Neuroscience*—was a fine example of the media's passing off a tiny crumb of evidence as a rich banquet of proof, simply because it conformed to their prejudices. Amodio and his co-authors rounded up 43 college students and asked them to peck at a keyboard when a series of "M"s and "W"s appeared on a computer screen. Half the students were told to make a "Go" signal when they saw an "M" and a "No go" when they saw a "W." The other half were told to do the reverse. The exercise took a total of 15 minutes.

From this, the authors claim that self-described conservatives—there were a grand total of seven in the study group—are more likely to make errors because they are conservatives. Right-wingers are more stubborn and closed-minded, while liberals are more cognitively flexible and able to adapt. "Liberals are more responsive to informational complexity, ambiguity and novelty," the authors write. Amodio told the *Daily Telegraph* that "liberals tended to be more sensitive and responsive to information that might conflict with their habitual way of thinking."

Well, that's all the media needed to hear. Around the country and the world, news outlets reported that conservatives are as poorly wired as a Bulgarian toaster circa 1970. Agence France-Presse announced that conservatives in the study "were less flexible, refusing to deviate from old habits 'despite signals that this . . . should be changed.'" The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the study "suggests that liberals are more adaptable than conservatives" and "might be better judges of the facts." It had already run an earlier article on the study in which two outside experts were consulted, both of them sympathetic to Amodio's findings. One of these experts, Frank Sulloway of UC–Berkeley's Institute of Personality and Social Research, was a co-author of an infamous 2003 study that reviewed decades of social-science research and concluded that conservatives tend to be fear-driven dogmatists who are incapable of dealing with ambiguity. The press release for that study, which is all that most journalists read, asserted that Adolf Hitler, Ronald Reagan, Benito Mussolini, and—wait for it!—Rush Limbaugh were all conservatives because "they all preached a return to an idealized past." The *Los Angeles Times* cited Sulloway to argue that Amodio's study could explain why President Bush has been so "single-minded" in his effort to win in Iraq, and why John Kerry was "perceived" by "some people" to be a "flip-flopper" for changing his mind about the war.

If only they'd let the kids peck at letters on a keyboard for a full half-hour, they might have discovered why Edmund Burke supported the American Revolution but not the French one.

Now, some will say I'm proving the scientists right by so reflexively disputing their new idea. But that's the prob-

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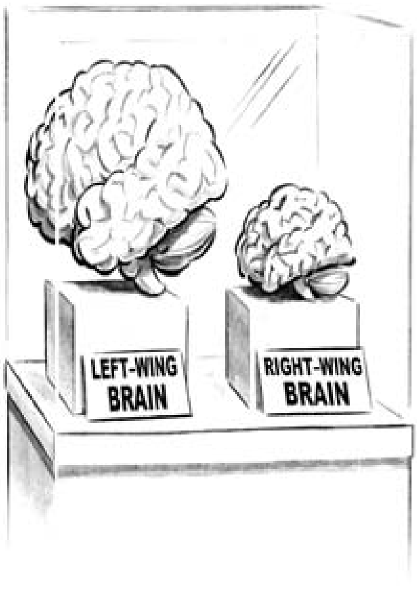
lem—it's not new. Ninety years ago, John Dewey—the philosophical founder of modern liberalism—decried the "stupidity of habit-bound minds." He aimed the phrase at critics of the effort to outlaw war, but it perfectly captured his own attitude—and the attitude of liberalism generally, then and now. As a debater's weapon, it is perhaps the greatest and most sinister barb ever forged. It makes skepticism of "new" ideas into a liability, even a mental defect, immediately putting those with millennia of evidence and trial-and-error behind them—i.e., conservatives—on the defensive. Small-"c" conservatives aren't wrong because their arguments are wrong; they're wrong because the conservative approach—measure (at least) twice, cut once—is the product of a malformed mind.

Meanwhile, when conservatives *favor change*—free-market reforms, the overthrow of hostile governments, entrepreneurialism, whatever—it's not because we are comfortable with new information, but because our brains crave a more comfortable order.

The New Deal intellectual Stuart Chase captured this spirit nicely when he proclaimed, "I speak in dispraise of dusty learning, and in disparagement of the historical technique." He continued, "Are our plans wrong? Who knows? Can we tell from reading history? Hardly."

A parallel argument can be found in Marxism. Recall how, according to "scientific socialism," the rulers of society are slaves to their classes, acting out of necessity. Class consciousness, according to Marxists of various stripes, is imprinted on the brain, which is why so many industrialists, "kulaks," bourgeois intellectuals, and the like had to be liquidated or "reeducated." Later, the Soviets saw psychiatry as a political tool, throwing those unwilling to see the "objective truth" of socialism into nuthouses. (One might well note that the Communists most committed to such policies were fear-driven dogmatists who were uncomfortable with ambiguity and no doubt unable to give a "Go" sign when they saw a "W" pop up on a screen.)

Back in the United States, the Left found its own uses for psychiatry, particularly after World War II, when the Holocaust finally ended the progressive fondness for eugenics. In 1950, Theodor Adorno, a Frankfurt School Marxist, released *The Authoritarian Personality*, which is today among the most discredited major works of social science of the 20th century. At the time of its release, though, it was taken as the final word on the interplay of politics and the brain. According to Adorno, conservatives were closet fascists because, among other reasons, they had been subjected to "strict toilet training." (Having recently labored in this field with a young child, I wonder if inculcating fascist sympathies might be a small price for success.) Adorno's methods were designed to guarantee the results he wanted. From the outset, he worked on the assumption that sympathy for Communism was a sign of open-mindedness and hostility to totalitarianism. Therefore, Communists could never be creeping authoritarians, while anti-Communists almost by definition had to be.



On display at the Liberal Museum?

DARREN GYGI

The Authoritarian Personality gave oxygen to a host of similar "findings." Adorno's colleague Max Horkheimer traced society's evils back to the "authoritarian family." Lionel Trilling famously asserted that conservatives deal not in ideas but in "irritable mental gestures." Richard Hofstadter swallowed *The Authoritarian Personality* whole, putting all of American history on the Freudian couch. The political scientist Herbert McClosky claimed he had scientifically proven not only that conservative "personality types" were drawn from the ranks of "the uninformed, the poorly educated, and . . . the less intelligent," but also that they were "inflexible and unyielding" and "intolerant." To boot, the conservative "fears change, dreads disorder, and is intolerant of nonconformity," and "derogates reason." In 1964, over a thousand mental-health professionals declared that Barry Goldwater was not "psychologically fit" to be president of the United States. Why? Because he was a conservative. The organizer of the petition took out an ad in the *New York Times* announcing this very scientific finding. Goldwater sued—and won.

Now, it seems indisputable that there are biological, neurological, and even genetic factors in political orientation. But this is a vast—and vastly complicated—subject, with nature and nurture knotted together. Indeed, what these studies leave out is that while small-"c" conservatism may have a strong "wiring" component, opposition to change can be found across the ideological spectrum. There are Marxists who haven't accounted for an inconvenient fact in decades. Liberal Democrats see Social Security as sacrosanct, immutable, and timeless; and Al Gore's biggest campaign promise in 2000 was to create a "lock box" and "stand up and fight" against conservative change. Then there are conservatives who'd like to privatize and deregulate pretty much everything. Indeed, if businessmen are so often politically conservative, how come they're so comfortable with the ever-changing landscape of the market?

Hannah Arendt once observed that the greatest contribution the Left made to American politics in the 1930s was to dispute facts by attacking motives. But attacking motives was never good enough, because even motives can be rational, decent, and freely chosen. Better to proclaim that conservatives don't think at all, and ridicule the stupidity of their habit-bound minds. If conservatives complain—out of habit, no doubt—liberals can just say, "Back off, man, we're scientists." That this project continues today is a sign of the dogmatic and fear-driven illiberalism at liberalism's heart. **NR**

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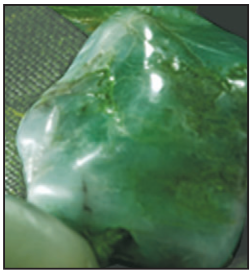

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Return of The Sheik

One man, and one tribe, in Iraq

MARIO LOYOLA

Fallujah, Iraq

THE town of Kharma lies several kilometers northeast of Fallujah in the dusty corridor of farmland that skirts the Euphrates River. This is the ancestral seat of the Jumaily tribe. According to its paramount lineal sheik, Mishan al-Jumaily, it numbers more than 100,000, and is present as far south as Basra and as far west as Jordan and Syria. Sheik Mishan describes the tribe's reach with an expansive and proud wave of the hand, as if to indicate all Arabia.

Even in Iraq, one of the most modern countries in the Arab world, the nation-state remains an often-dysfunctional graft onto feudal life. Outside the largest cities, and above all here in Sunni-dominated Anbar Province, the essential political and social structures are the tribes: enormous extended families bound together by unique traditions and deep collective memories. Members of a tribe refer to one another as "cousin."

The political life of a tribe revolves around its sheiks—those who "give the law." It is often the sheik, not the state, who is first to settle disputes, provide for the needy, and lead in times of crisis. A tribe's paramount sheik—its "sheik of sheiks"—normally holds his place by right of primogeniture. The invariable theme of interior decorations at a sheik's house is not religion, but ancestry: Nearly all the pictures are of the sheik's father, grandfather, uncles, and brothers.

All that said, the scene at Sheik Mishan's is about as quaint as life in the Corleone family compound. Young men wielding AK-47s guard the approaches; in the gatehouse, assault rifles are lined up like pool cues; a machine-gun nest is visible on the roof.

Americans here often compare tribal leaders to mafia dons, but there is an important difference. The sheiks are not often at odds with the law. They *are* the law, and today they are defending the law by force. The young men of the Jumaily tribe have been joining officially sanctioned security forces, from the neighborhood watch to the Iraqi army, by the hundreds—especially in the two months since Sheik Mishan returned from self-imposed exile in Syria to vow alliance with the coalition, fealty to the central government, and enmity toward al-Qaeda.

I meet Sheik Mishan while spending several days with U.S. Marines outside Kharma. He is something of a celebrity to them. It was Brig. Gen. John Allen, deputy commander of the Second Marine Expeditionary Force in Anbar, who personally convinced the sheik to return to Iraq.

For Sheik Mishan and his tribe, it has been a voyage to hell and back. The tribe took up arms against the coalition shortly after the March 2003 invasion. It fought fiercely against an awesome military force, even as al-Qaeda rose to dominance through enticement, intimidation, and murder, finally drawing the vicious reprisals of Shiite death squads against Sheik Mishan's fellow Sunnis. The tribe has committed—and suffered—the worst crimes of this atrocious conflict.

If the tribe is fierce, its leader seems a study in gentleness. Both humble and gracious in my interactions with him, Sheik Mishan is beset by visitors at all hours. I accompany two Marine officers on a business call—basic "stability operations" stuff: repairing a water pipe in one sector, mustering a civilian watch for several new area checkpoints, etc.—and am rushed past the sheik's guards and several dozen callers.

Mishan receives us as honored guests. I am so at ease that I soon commit a faux pas: I tell an "Iraqi joke," which, in my defense, seems safe because I have been told it by an Iraqi-army colonel.

This is the joke: In Saddam-era Iraq, an official of the Baath party is informed that he is to be transferred out of Baghdad to become head of one of the provincial party offices. His daughter is very upset because she is studying English and loves the teacher she has in Baghdad. Father promises to find a great new English teacher for her in their new home.

A few weeks after they move, the Baath official calls his men in and tells them, "Go find the man who speaks the best English in this town." They leave right away. Several days later, the official

Mr. Loyola is a senior fellow of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

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By John Fleming

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realizes that he has never heard back about the best English-speaker, so he calls his men in and asks if they were able to find him. "Yes sir," say the men. "We beat the confession out of him. He is buried in the back."

My hosts and the other guests laugh and nod politely at the punch line. Then a Marine lieutenant takes me aside and says gravely, "Mario, think. The joke was told to you by an Iraqi-army colonel, which means that he was probably Shiite. And this is Baath country. Basically you just told a Shiite joke making fun of *these* people."

It could be a disaster, but luckily I am invited to return the next day for a longer interview and lunch. That is when I learn why Mishan didn't have a worse reaction to my joke: He claims never to have been close to the Baath.

Sheik Mishan, before a portrait of his father

AN INDEPENDENT

Of course, not many Iraqis will admit to an American that they once supported Saddam. But Mishan has convincing credentials. His cousin, the pan-Arabist Abdul Salam Arif, was a key player in toppling the Hashemite monarchy in 1958. Though he was named president of Iraq when the Baathists came to power in 1963, later that year he publicly broke with them. Mishan himself says that he was a high-ranking magistrate in the late 1970s, but was forced from his post (like many other Iraqi judges) because of his refusal to do the bidding of the Baath. And he explains that, in 2000, when he ran for a seat in Saddam's rubber-stamp parliament, he took office as an independent. The Baath put pressure on him then to join the party, but Mishan refused. Referring to himself in the third person, he explains: "The people loved Sheik Mishan, so Sheik Mishan could be independent."

If Saddam's relationships with Mishan and other sheiks were often difficult, his interactions with the tribes themselves were another matter. The largely Sunni tribes of Anbar were of the same stock as those surrounding Baghdad and collected along the upper Tigris around Samarra and Tikrit, Saddam's hometown. They were his most reliable constituency, and they did not receive the Americans warmly.

Turkey's refusal to allow transit rights for the U.S. Fourth Infantry Division at the time of the 2003 invasion proved disastrous for Iraq's Sunni heartland—and for the coalition. Central Command had intended to occupy the valleys of the Euphrates and upper Tigris with that division, but now the area remained largely denuded of forces. In the ensuing vacuum, the Sunni "resistance" gathered momentum, and Fallujah became its home base.

Mishan's immediate concern after the invasion was the preservation of order amidst the near-absolute lawlessness that rapidly overtook much of Iraq. He recalls sending his men to secure the neighborhoods of Kharma, as well as key installations and government buildings. But it was a losing fight, because the young men of his tribe proved even more sympathetic to the "resistance" than they had been to the Baath. It was during this period that Mishan's son was killed (accidentally, he says) by American forces. Eventually, four of the sheik's six children would be killed—the others by insurgents.

By the time of the March 2004 Blackwater Massacre—in which four American contractors were murdered—al-Qaeda infiltrators had become a powerful element of the insurgency, and were rapidly dominating Fallujah. It is now clear that, contrary to popular belief, al-Qaeda ran into problems with tribal leaders almost from the start.

Unlike Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of the virulently intolerant strain of Islam known as Wahhabism, Iraqi society is not insular. For thousands of years the central crossroads of the Middle East, Iraq has long been forward-looking, pluralist, and tolerant of religious diversity. Among the Sunni population in particular, religious leaders have nothing like the power or prestige of the sheiks. In consequence, while al-Qaeda's political message sold well, its religious one—which was all along what distinguished it—did not.

Iraqis nowadays commonly refer to the insurgents as "al-Qaeda." But Sheik Mishan uses a different term: *takfiris*. A takfiri is one who identifies "bad" Muslims and arrogates to himself the right to punish them. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was a passionate takfiri; he justified his habit of beheading victims with a butcher knife by arguing that, according to the Koran, those who are not true Muslims are to be killed like animals.

According to Mishan, two insurgent leaders in particular, Omar Hadid and Abdullah al-Janabi, became the face of al-Qaeda in Fallujah. At first he tried to reason with them. In 2004, he repeatedly requested meetings with them but was refused. At one point, he sent a message accusing them of destroying Fallujah. "This is not jihad," he reports telling them. "This is not from Allah. You are killing women, and old men, and children. You cannot say who is a good Muslim—only Allah can decide. What you are doing is forbidden."

For Sheik Mishan, these takfiris brought with them a foreign ideology and sought to "control the people's mind." And their motives were suspect. One of Mishan's aides says to me, with a hint of betrayal, "At first the insurgents were true mujahideen. But later they just fought for money."

Even in Mishan's inner circle, sympathies for the insurgents ran deep—at first. In Iraq I have heard many different accounts of

THE ROYAL COUPLE

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A must for any fan, *Deja Reviews* includes classic essays such as "A Wasp Looks at Lizzie Borden" and "South Mouth: Why Liberals Hate Dixie"—plus 59 book reviews, the milieu where Miss King's talents are on their most glorious display. Pulitzer Prize-winner Paul Greenberg writes in his insightful introduction: "my favorite part of this collection may be the book reviews. Florence King's specialty is the good review of a bad book. It would be hard, it might be impossible, to top this opening paragraph of one such review:

> Back in the Cold War, whenever I had to review an unreadable book, I always comforted myself with the thought, 'Maybe the Russians will drop the Bomb and I won't have to finish reading this.' Those were the days. This time, stuck with *A Pilgrim's Way: The Personal Story of the Episcopal Bishop Charged with Heresy for Ordaining a Gay Man Who Was in a Committed Relationship*, by the Rt. Rev. Walter C. Righter, author of the longest subtitle in publishing history, all I could hope for was an asteroid.

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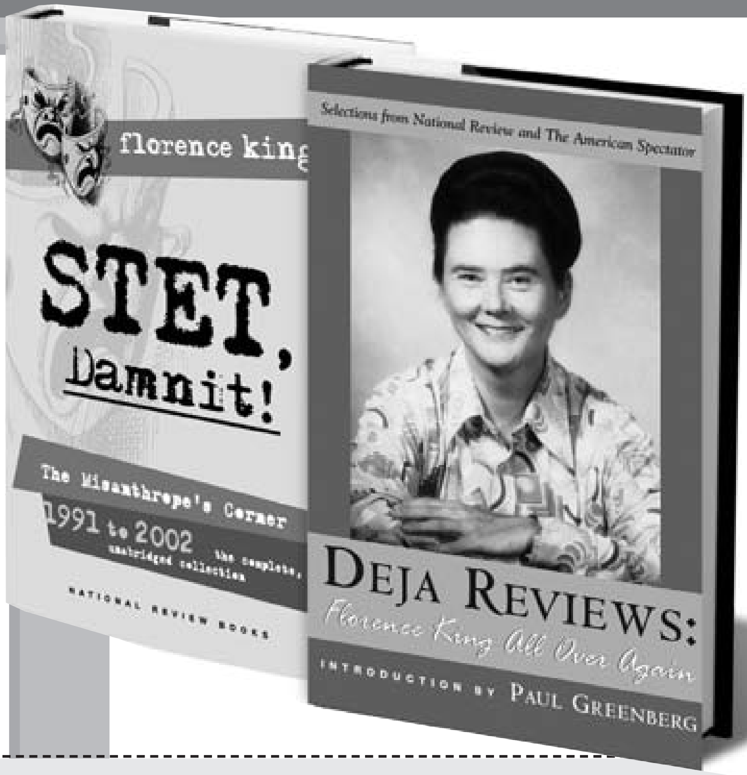
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what sparked the insurgency. This one is typical: Marines surround an all-girls school in Fallujah. One man shows up to try to get his daughter out and take her home, but the soldiers refuse to break the cordon. A shoving match ensues, and the soldiers knock the man's traditional headdress to the ground—a terrible insult in Arab culture. The man returns a few hours later with some "cousins," armed for revenge. They fire on the soldiers and are killed. Now there is a blood feud, and the entire tribe takes up arms to exact vengeance.

It is clear that most Sunnis believed the Saddamist and al-Qaeda propaganda, which was to the effect that America had come to seize their land and oil. It would take a few years for them to realize that there was no truth to this, but in the meantime the relationship between al-Qaeda and the sheiks would go from bad to worse.

Not only did al-Qaeda's ideology threaten the authority of the sheiks, its presence made life unbearable for everyone. In the areas it overran, terror became all-encompassing. Schools and businesses were soon permanently shuttered; people couldn't feed their families; and social services totally broke down. Lawlessness reigned supreme.

But the sheiks began to push back—and that is when al-Qaeda turned on them. By the start of 2005, Mishan was receiving death threats, and in January of that year he fled to Jordan in a rented car. A week later, one of his sons was kidnapped while at work and held for $500,000 ransom. Mishan was unable to pay. They killed him.

FATEFUL EVENTS

Mishan did not spend much time in Jordan—"It was too expensive," he explains—and soon found his way to Syria, where fellow tribesmen kept him safe and well fed. As the months of exile turned into years, he gave up hope of returning to Iraq.

Meanwhile, unable to defeat its main enemy, al-Qaeda followed the pattern of the Communists during the Spanish Civil War: It murdered allies in a bid for power within the "resistance." Many sheiks were killed in the ensuing months, and many more fled to Jordan, Syria, and Egypt. Beneath the surface, almost invisible to American commanders, the Sunnis' once-energetic support for the insurgency grew passive, now motivated less by nationalism than by terror.

Then came the bombing of the Shiites' revered Golden Mosque in Samarra, which finally triggered the slide toward civil war that al-Qaeda had been hoping for. Shiite death squads, often operating from within the Iraqi Security Forces, began murdering Sunnis by the thousands, and the country fell into a violent *dégringolade*.

It is now clear that the Samarra mosque bombing was al-Qaeda's undoing. The resulting Shiite rampage, though largely indiscriminate, wiped out entire cadres of al-Qaeda and their supporters. Even more important, it made the Sunnis desperate for protection—which al-Qaeda could not provide. In all of Iraq, only the Americans were both willing and able to protect the Sunnis now.

By fall of 2006, when a new U.S. division command assumed control of coalition forces in Anbar, the sheiks were openly rebelling against al-Qaeda. The incoming deputy commander, Marine Brig. Gen. John Allen, had a plan for capitalizing on their revolt.

What came to be known as the Anbar Awakening began when al-Qaeda murdered several of the province's most important sheiks. In a series of large council meetings, Anbar's sheiks gathered under heavy security to pledge a fight to the death against al-Qaeda—and to pledge the young men of their tribes to the Iraqi Security Forces.

The Shiite-dominated central government has resisted a rapid expansion of the forces' Sunni membership, insisting that many of the new recruits are former insurgents and former al-Qaeda. The tribes have reacted by organizing informal militia-type neighborhood watches—which the Americans have been quick to regularize.

The received wisdom now is that, because the clearing operations in Fallujah and Ramadi in 2004–06 were not followed by a systematic effort to "hold and build," they had little appreciable effect on al-Qaeda's power and reach. But there was another problem: Even when the neighborhoods were held, al-Qaeda retained free rein in the outlying countryside.

Once cleared, Anbar's main cities could be secured only if the countryside was secured too, General Allen realized, because it was vital to keep the insurgents from reaching the cities at all. He also realized that the tribal-based neighborhood watches could be the key to controlling that countryside, serving as "defense-in-depth" for the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi. He set about systematically courting the tribes around each city.

Fallujah is ringed by perhaps six tribes, the most important of which are the Albu Issa and the Jumaily. The former was already in a pitched struggle against al-Qaeda. Allen was convinced that if he could muster the Jumaily it would be a tipping point; the entire confederation of tribes that populates the Euphrates corridor from Baghdad to the Syrian border might join the coalition.

And so it happened. In May 2007 Allen contacted Sheik Mishan through intermediaries. At first the sheik refused to leave Jordan. Then another of his sons was killed on the road to Basra by an insurgent IED (probably Iranian-made). It was after that, he explains, that he agreed to return. He traveled to Amman, where Allen met him with a C-130 military transport plane. Mishan arrived at his home in Iraq on July 4.

Sheik Mishan evinces the highest regard for Allen. When I tell Mishan that Allen has urged me to meet him and sends his regards, I become the object of particular favor, and when I join the sheik for lunch he insists that I sit next to him so he can hand-serve me—customary treatment for esteemed guests.

Today, Mishan's days are filled with the stuff of sheikdom—solving the practical problems that come up in the everyday life of his tribe. He frets that the Shiite militias are worse than Saddam. But his most consuming worries are for the needs of his people—a water-treatment plant, for instance. I ask whether his tribe needs the coalition to solve these problems. He gives the same answer I have heard many times from Anbar's tribal leaders: Right now nothing is possible without the help of the Americans. "You can say that we are the left hand and the Marines are the right hand," he explains.

The funny thing is that the Marines in Anbar have come to think the same of the sheiks. As General Allen likes to say, "If you get the tribal piece wrong, nothing will be right. But if you get it right, then you can figure out the rest."

By giving the tribes a central place in the political life of Anbar, the U.S. military is in essence allowing the people to live as they traditionally have. What Mishan wants for them is law and order—and the U.S. military is helping him deliver. That is why coalition forces are now greeted as friends in the part of Iraq where, not too long ago, they were most hated. **NR**

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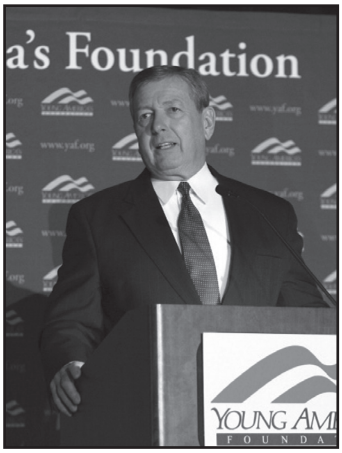

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■ COVER STORY II

A Matter Of Pride

Anthropological discernment in our current conflict

RICHARD LOWRY

PRESIDENT BUSH doesn't give up easily. Back in mid-July, when news of progress in Iraq hadn't yet made a dent in the political debate and even administration officials were leaking about an imminent drawdown of troops, he met with a dozen conservative journalists at the White House. In his introductory remarks before taking questions, he made a point of affirming his belief in "the universality of freedom," and called the spread of governments based on liberty "inevitable."

Nothing that had happened in the nearly six years since he launched his freedom agenda in the wake of the September 11 attacks had changed Bush's view about the universality of the desire for freedom, or our ability to actualize that desire in free, democratic governments. This is where Bush's resoluteness can fade into a blinkered unrealism. We have learned many lessons about human nature from Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East, but the universal hunger for liberty hasn't been foremost among them. That doesn't mean Bush is wrong in the abstract about freedom, but he would benefit from a less reductive view of human nature that takes account of all our many motivations—especially pride.

Bush grounds his belief in the universality of freedom in his Christian faith. "I come at it many different ways," he told the journalists. "Really not primarily from a political-science perspective, frankly; it's more of a theological perspective. I do believe there is an Almighty, and I believe a gift of that Almighty to all is freedom. And I will tell you, that is a principle that no one can convince me doesn't exist."

This drives Bush's critics nuts. They see it as yet another instance of his evangelical Christianity's distorting his public policy. But the belief that we have personal and moral freedom is based on a core Christian teaching (we are made in God's image), and the belief that human rights are God-given is firmly within the mainstream of Anglo-American political thought.

It's the accent Bush puts on this Christian truth above all others that is problematic, and lends itself to a sunnier view of human nature than his faith need entail. As a Christian, he could have a keener appreciation of the Fall; God may have given us freedom, but this world is shaped by our rejection of what God intended for us. As a Christian, he might look to the Ten Commandments as a rough guide to what fallen human nature tends toward—greed, hatred, envy, and selfishness of all kinds. As a Christian, he could realize that we are made to know God and be known by Him; in other words, gaining recognition is central to who we are as human beings.

What does the stereotypical celebrity ask when he's not getting his way? "Don't you know *who I am*?" We are usually offended when someone forgets or mispronounces our name—because we want to be *known*. The Book of Revelation says that in the Kingdom each of us will receive a white stone with a name written on it that is known only to God and to us. That is our true name, a name that only God knows because only He, as Anthony Bloom writes in his book *Beginning to Pray*, knows us in "our absolute and unrepeatable uniqueness."

This promise of ultimate recognition is a great comfort to Christians, but most of the world isn't Christian. To fill this—to paraphrase Pascal—God-shaped gap in our psyche, we look to be honored by others. We can find our recognition in benign ways (from family, accomplishment, dutifulness), and in ways that can tip into monomania or criminality (fame, riches, power). But the drive for recognition in us is strong, so strong that for many people there is something worse than being denied freedom—being denied honor.

'GROUP EGOISM'

If this is true of individuals, it is especially true of groups, whether clans or nations. Reinhold Niebuhr wrote of "group egoism." He explained, "In every human group there is less reason to guide and to check impulse, less capacity for self-transcendence, less ability to comprehend the needs of others and therefore more unrestrained egoism than the individuals, who compose the group, reveal in their personal relationships."

It is easy for us to forget this because we live in a West where even in America the force of nationalism is somewhat muted, and in a society where the individual is paramount. But the War on Terror has propelled us into intimate contact with societies where groups—tribes and clans—still predominate, and shame and honor define life.

In this connection, the depredations of al-Qaeda seem to be less immediately a symptom of an absence of freedom than of wounded pride. Lawrence Wright's brilliantly reported account of the rise of al-Qaeda, *The Looming Tower*, speaks of the sense of humiliation brought on by "Islam's long, steady retreat from the gates of Vienna" since 1683. Al-Qaeda is partly a byproduct of the devastating encounter between the West and traditional societies over the last few centuries that historian Theodore H. von Laue describes in *The World Revolution of Westernization*.

"The victorious Westerners," he writes, "their own ways and self-confidence boosted by their worldwide sway, left the rest of the world humiliated and in cultural limbo." Traditional cultures were subverted by virtue of their manifest inadequacy when compared with the power of the West. "Among the majority of peoples around the world," von Laue continues, "the results were cultural chaos characterized by a loss of purpose, moral insensibility, and a penchant for violence; by social and political fragmentation; and by the psychological misery of knowingly belonging to a 'backward' society." Osama bin Laden would understand.

In al-Qaeda, we face a force that often understands the cultural landscape over which we are competing better than we do. The

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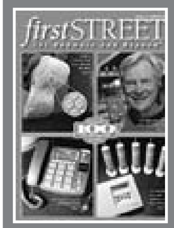

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late, unlamented leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, once made a narrow escape from a U.S. raid by running from a car and immediately asking what sub-tribe lived in that area. He knew that was the important question. Today, in light of the revolt of the Sunni tribes beginning in Anbar Province, he could ask the same question, but it might not avail him anything.

Without suggesting any moral equivalence (obviously), al-Qaeda and the United States can be seen as having had a race in Iraq over who would most thoroughly alienate the Sunni tribes. We got off to an early lead as foreign occupiers who had made possible the rise of Shiite rule and—in response to the insurgency—killed and captured young tribesmen. But al-Qaeda eventually lapped us several times over. The Sunni sheiks may not like foreigner occupiers, but they especially don't like foreign occupiers who assassinate their leaders, insist on marrying their daughters, commit unspeakable acts of brutality, and prevent them from smoking and drinking.

We had entered Iraq as a radical force. When we allied with the tribes, we became a more conservative force, protecting the tribal way of life from those who would overturn and repress it. This turnabout—so crucial a part of the success of the surge—doesn't neatly fit into President Bush's freedom agenda.

The tribes might be protecting their freedoms in one sense (they want to do things forbidden by the Islamic extremists), but they were also reacting against outrages against their honor. The tribes tend to give their women in marriage only within the tribe. When al-Qaeda in Iraq's foreign leadership showed up hoping to marry the daughters of key tribal families to cement an alliance, trouble ensued.

"Marrying women to strangers, let alone foreigners, is just not done," writes Dave Kilcullen, an Australian counterinsurgency expert who has worked closely with General Petraeus. "AQI, with their hyper-reductionist version of 'Islam' stripped of cultural content, discounted the tribes' view as ignorant, stupid and sinful. This led to violence, as these things do: AQI killed a sheikh over his refusal to give daughters of his tribe to them in marriage, which created a revenge obligation (*tha'r*) on his people, who attacked AQI." The revolt rolled on from there, deftly exploited by our military leadership on the ground.

The Sunni tribes want security, want protection for their traditional way of life, and want money, which we have been funneling to them through various means. These are first-order human desires, and we are better able to provide them than al-Qaeda, hence our alliance. As Kilcullen writes, "Call me cynical, but I tend to trust self-interest, group identity and revenge as reliable motivations—more so than protestations of aspirational democracy, anyway."

THE TRIBES

Tribalism in its various forms is a key part of the War on Terror, since it figures so prominently in key battlefields (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, etc.). It is hardly the ultimate issue, even in Iraq, where it has gotten so much attention lately. The Sunni tribes predominate in the West, but Baghdad is more secular and less tribal, while other areas of the country (Kurdistan and the Shiite south) have different social landscapes. In Iraq and elsewhere there are other significant complicating factors in any drive toward democracy (the role of Islam, ethno-sectarian divisions, the absence of civil society as we know it). But tribalism is important enough that it should have been a focus prior to roughly August 2007, when the tribes' revolt in Iraq made headlines.

But both the Left and the Right have had little interest. At our universities, as much time and energy is spent arguing that the West has repressed other cultures as understanding those cultures themselves. (Too much understanding might be uncomfortable—there's a reason these cultures are so resistant to modernity.) On the right, there's never been much interest in anthropology, and a great deal of energy is devoted to defending American power against the cultural Left. So both sides tend toward navel-gazing.

While Bush was talking about the universal appeal of liberty, the tribal dynamics of Iraq were understood and exploited by the nation's keenest cultural anthropologists, most hands-on social scientists, and best foreign-aid society—the United States Army and Marine Corps. A counterinsurgency requires understanding human motivation and the particularities of a situation and culture; abstractions are useless.

This suggests an important difference between the Cold War and the War on Terror. Both are ideological struggles. And both are playing out globally. But the heart of the Cold War was Europe. When the Berlin Wall fell, it removed a political and ideological obstacle between the Free World and people in the Eastern bloc who lived much as we do. In the War on Terror, the battleground is the hearts and minds of people who (many of them) have radically different mores than we do.

When the Berlin Wall fell, it removed a political and ideological obstacle between the Free World and people in the Eastern bloc who lived much as we do. In the War on Terror, the battleground is the hearts and minds of people who (many of them) have radically different mores than we do.

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Winning benighted parts of the Muslim world over to modernity, then, is not just an ideological matter. In an insightful study of the British colonial experience in India in *Policy Review*, Stanley Kurtz writes, "The real barrier to modernity in the non-Western world lies in the pervasive and recalcitrant structures of everyday life—structures few Westerners understand. In India, the key barriers to modernization are the joint family system and caste. The counterparts in Iraq are the patriarchal family system, the bonds of lineage and tribe, and related conceptions of collective honor."

Kurtz demonstrates how it's possible to implant a democratic culture in a traditional society like India's in an enduring way—if you occupy it for 200 years, take over its educational system, and create a merit-based jobs system that exists outside of clan and caste. Obviously, nothing like this is in the offing in Iraq, or anywhere else. But we must at the very least *understand* the people we are trying to change, and realize we won't achieve instant results, as the Bush administration failed to do when it invaded Iraq and stood back to watch the inevitable flowering of democracy.

A realistic appraisal of the human material with which we are working needn't be a counsel of despair. Consider the War on Terror as having negative and positive aspects. The negative aspect is killing and capturing members of al-Qaeda, and should be pursued as robustly as possible. In a shame–honor society, al-Qaeda should feel the shame of defeat, of being routed from wherever it attempts to establish itself. Al-Qaeda's vision is so extreme that the traditionalism of Muslim societies can work to our advantage, as we've seen in the tribal revolt in Iraq.

Then there's the positive aspect of the war: trying to provide a better model for political, social, and economic development in the Muslim world. Here we have to be careful, especially in pushing culture change. You can imagine the tribes' reaction if the next thing they hear from us after al-Qaeda is gone is, "Hi, we're the United States government, and we're here to liberate your women." We have to be patient and flexible, doing whatever works even if it doesn't meet our own expectations in the near term.

Even if people desire to be free, representative government relies on institutions and attitudes that have to grow and take root over time. In Iraq, for instance, no universal human desire is creating competent governmental ministries or a tradition of political compromise, loyal opposition, and adherence to the rule of law. If these things that are so essential to a functioning democracy arise, they will be the product of hard work, trial-and-error, and a lot of hand-holding from us.

In the end, the positive aspect of the War on Terror is worth pursuing, exactly because pride is such an important human motivator. In *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama argued that the drive for recognition is the force behind the rise of liberal democracy. People want recognition, and gaining equal rights is a form of it. They want things of which to be justifiably proud, and better governed societies can provide them. The Iraqi elections may have been as much a victory for pride—remember the Iraqis holding up their purple fingers—as for freedom.

So President Bush isn't wrong about freedom necessarily; deep down, it is the desire of every human heart, right beside pride and much else that we ignore at our peril. **NR**

CHINA

Leader of the Chinese

Jian-li Yang, democracy activist, after five years in prison

JAY NORDLINGER

JIAN-LI YANG is a face of the new China—or rather, what many hope will be the new China: free, democratic, and respectful of human rights. He is one of the leading democracy activists of the Chinese people, and one of the leading democracy activists in the world. From April 2002 to April 2007, he was confined to Chinese prisons. There was once a book about the American Civil War: *Across Five Aprils*. Yang had six Aprils. He recently returned to the United States, where he has been living since the 1980s (when not in Chinese prisons). His story is well worth knowing. I will provide a kind of synopsis.

He was born in 1963, in the province of Shandong, northeastern China. His father was a Communist-party official; his mother was a homemaker. There were nine children in the Yang family, one of whom died at age two or three. Yang doesn't know for sure. This child, a girl, died in a famine, and his parents were always reluctant to talk about it.

Jian-li was a precocious, independent-minded youngster, and he had many complaints against the Communist system. He aired these complaints at the dinner table (when there was food), much to the consternation of his father. "My father always loved me," says Yang, "but he was careful not to let others know what I said at home." Yang's father could neither read nor write, but Jian-li was a brilliant scholar. He went directly from the Chinese equivalent of junior high school to college, at the age of 15. He took a degree in mathematics at a Shandong teachers college, then went to Beijing Normal University, for a masters degree in math.

While in Beijing, he was a Party official, in charge of student affairs. He was given to believe that he was the youngest person to rank so high in the Communist hierarchy. What had happened was, General Secretary Hu Yaobang had called on young intellectuals to join the Party: to give it fresh blood, and change it from within. Yang heeded this call. But, in time, the Party asked him to collect information on his fellow students, and to shape their ideas and activities. "I suddenly felt that I was only a tool of the oligarchs." So he decided to go to the United States for doctoral studies.

He went to Berkeley, and was immediately struck by the beauty of the Bay Area. "The air was so clean, I could actually see the sun." It had been hard to see the sun in Beijing, because of the fog of pollution. Even more, he was struck by the freedom

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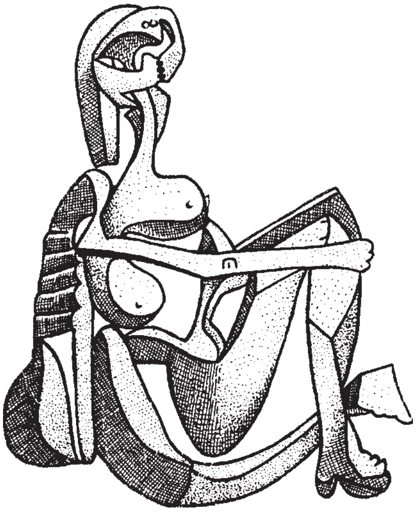

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priest	presider or presbyter
Bishop Smith	Bishop Bob
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Kingdom of God	Realm of God
Our Father in Heaven	Our Parent in heaven
"…God and His love"	"…God and God's love"
Son of God	Child of God
Our Lord Jesus Christ	the Christ figure
A.D. (*Anno Domini*)	C.E. (Common Era)
Our Lady of Guadalupe	Our Woman of Guadalupe
husband and wife	partners
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that people enjoyed. He got his Ph.D. in math—under an adviser who was "a hippie," reports Yang. "He had long hair, and he wore jeans and sandals. That was a big surprise to me!"

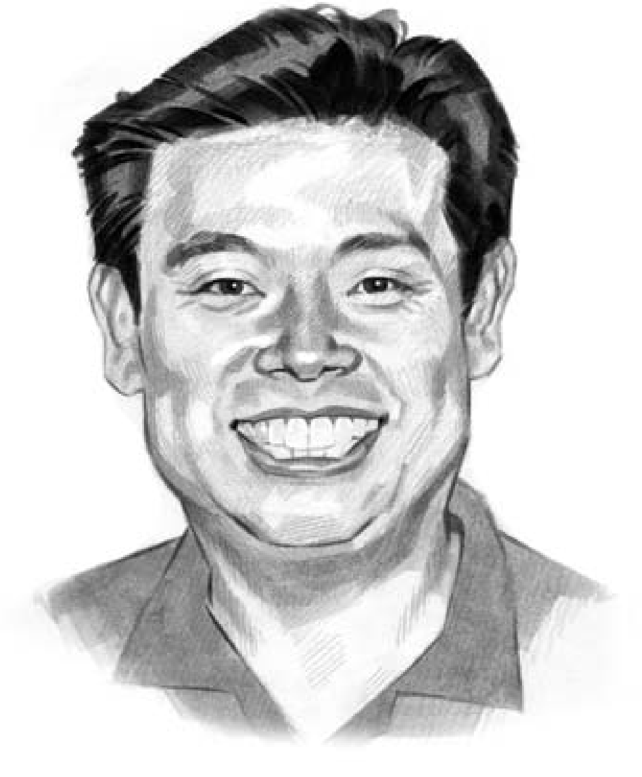
In the spring of 1989, the student movement in China broke out, and it did not take long for the government to start applying harsh measures. Yang, in California, could not sit still. He flew to Beijing to do what he could, and, in fact, he helped lead the movement. In the first week of June, the government performed its massacres. By the time the killing stopped, thousands had lost their lives, not just in Tiananmen Square, but elsewhere in China. In a general chaos, Yang left the country, flying back to the United States.

While at Berkeley, Yang was instrumental in setting up a foundation: the Foundation for China in the 21st Century. That was in 1990. And then, when he moved to Harvard, he took the foundation with him. At Harvard, Yang earned a second Ph.D.: this one in political economy. And his work on Chinese democracy and human rights increased.

It was in 2001 that Yang visited the offices of National Review. He had organized a conference on interethnic conflict in China, and wished to talk about it. He had enlisted the help of the Dalai Lama and many others, prominent and not. In our offices, he was remarkable for his cheerfulness, intellect, and what you might call natural, easy leadership. I asked him what book best described the situation of Chinese intellectuals. He answered, quick as a flash, "*The Captive Mind*, by Czeslaw Milosz" (the great Polish poet and anti-Communist). Thus we see the commonality of Communist, and anti-Communist, experiences.

Later, Yang also mentioned to me several other books: two by Orwell—*1984* and *Animal Farm*; Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*; and, above all, *Les Misérables*, Victor Hugo's classic. "I love it for many reasons," he said. First, there was Jean Valjean, "who grows so much" and "who is loving to so many people." Second, there was Bishop Myriel, who demonstrates stunning humility and charity. "I could never come close to being a person like him, but he is my model. Whenever I think of him, I think how distant I am from him. I try to be like him, but it is impossible." Others might disagree with Yang.

A word about his family life: In 1985, while still in China, Yang married Christina Fu. Like her husband, Christina has a Ph.D. in mathematics; she is a researcher at the Harvard Medical School. Christina is a U.S. citizen, while her husband has long had the classification "permanent resident." They have two children: Anita, 15, and Aaron, 12.



Jian-li Yang

DARREN GYGI

'I SIMPLY HAD TO BE THERE'

Yang did not touch down in China from 1989 to 2002. His passport expired in 1991, and he tried to have it renewed, but was of course denied. He was high up on the Chinese government's blacklist. But "I never stopped thinking of going back to China, to do our work, to advance democracy, to use my education and gift from God—whatever—for the good of China." In the spring of '02, there was labor unrest in the country's northeast. Workers contacted Yang and asked for his help. He wrote some strategies for them. Eventually, however, "I felt a need to be there—just as I had felt in 1989, when the student movement started. I simply had to be there. So I planned my trip back to China."

He returned in April 2002, on someone else's passport. He had no problem negotiating the airport in Beijing, and he stayed in the capital for a few days. He did not contact any friends or colleagues, however: "I was prepared to be arrested at some point, and I didn't want anybody to get into trouble," on account of having met Yang. While in Beijing, he talked to workers—manual laborers—and took notes. He also went to a key site in Tiananmen Square, "where I had silence for a number of minutes."

Then, by train, he went to the northeast, where he stayed in the homes of various laid-off workers. From there, to the southwest, where he planned to exit China on the Burmese border. "There were some people waiting for me, to give me help and smuggle me out through boat to Thailand." But he was caught by the authorities: They had discovered the falsity of the national ID card he was carrying.

At this point, a harrowing several hours ensued (followed, of course, by five years that included much that was harrowing). Again, I will synopsize. At first, Yang was taken to a hotel, while the authorities sought to learn who he really was. The hotel room was on the first floor, and security was relatively light. He jumped out the window, escaping. This was at 3 in the morning.

Yang found that he could not go to his original border meeting-place—by the time he got there, the authorities would be there, in place of his friends. His notes, filled with incriminating information, had been confiscated. Yang thought of making his way to the Vietnamese border, along a route somewhat known to him: He had helped colleagues escape in this fashion before. "But suddenly, when I was the one having to do it, it felt completely different." It felt harder, infinitely harder. Yang then thought of going to Beijing, and, specifically, to the American embassy. But he remembered that he had come to China expecting to be arrested. Would he flinch from it now? In addition, he had come to assert a right to return—to return to one's own country, to be on one's own land. Going to the embassy would appear somehow craven.

So, sometime between 7:30 and 8, he jumped back through that window, into the hotel room—and waited to be taken away.

PRISONS

He was taken to Beijing, and put into Qincheng Prison, which Yang describes as China's Bastille. He was held without trial for 14 months. He was cut off from "meaningful human contact," as he says, and subjected to abuse both physical and mental. He was made to sit, unmoving, four hours a day, staring at a wall two meters away. This is standard practice for Chinese Communist jailers. For two weeks, Yang was handcuffed unceasingly. Once, they beat him for praying. (He had ignored their orders to stop. Yang is a Christian, incidentally.) The worst of it was an interrogation technique: "I was totally consumed by worry when my interrogators hinted that Christina and my six-year-old son had been taken into custody. I was so worried I almost collapsed."

The trial, needless to say, was a sham. They charged him with spying for Taiwan—one of the usual charges trumped up by the government for dissenters. Yang refused to answer any questions at trial, on several grounds: First, the game was rigged; second, China was violating its own written laws and procedures; third, the trial was secret, not open—Yang never accepted the legality of it. He did, however, submit two statements: eloquent, inspired, and, in a way, overpowering. They not only examine the specifics of Yang's case but call on China to be a better self. The court sentenced him to five years, starting from the day of his arrest, April 27, 2002.

One of his stops before his final prison was Tian Tang He, a transfer station, whose name is "ironic," Yang explains. It means Heavenly River—and Tian Tang He is one of the most hellish places in China. It is known as the country's harshest prison. In it, however, Yang was basically let alone. The reason was that he had been diagnosed as having had a "mild stroke" while in a previous prison; and his case was high-profile, attracting significant international attention. So the authorities decided against brutalizing Yang: It was too great a risk. All the other prisoners, Yang says, underwent "constant physical and psychological torture."

Yang served the final two and a half years of his sentence in Beijing's Prison No. 2. As before, his treatment was lenient, though he was put into solitary confinement for four months: He had been denied the right to see a lawyer, and, in protest, he had refused to wear prison clothes. In general, however, he was a privileged prisoner, being so high-profile, and he used his privileges for good.

Fellow prisoners in his section respected and looked up to him; and so did the guards. The prisoners were not "politicals," by the way. Rather, they were common criminals, not excluding murderers. Was Yang ever scared of them? "No. I believe that everybody deserves respect, so I accorded them their dignity, as human beings. I also felt that, if I was kind to them, and helped them, everything would be better." They came to him for all sorts of help, especially with education: He taught them in English, math, economics, and anything else they wanted. He gave lessons in Chinese calligraphy. He also gave five lectures on logic, and wrote a textbook. "Logic is necessary in the search for truth," he says. He even coached a basketball team. Everyone in his section was treated decently, in relative terms, because of Yang's presence there. After his departure . . . things surely deteriorated.

Yang won't say it, but he was obviously a moral leader in prison. In February 2003, I wrote the following about him, at NATIONAL REVIEW ONLINE: "I knew, when I was with him—even though he was young and rather jolly—that I was in the presence of a great man. . . . His cellmates—if he has cellmates—will sense his greatness too." And so it must have been.

Shortly after he arrived at Beijing Prison No. 2, in early December 2004, Yang arranged a celebration for Christmas—a celebration that he shared with five others. Then, he formed a

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Bible-study group, in which 20 or 30 people eventually participated. "I helped baptize three of them." None of this was formally permitted, of course. But the guards did not report it to their superiors, not wanting trouble from them or from Yang, who would have protested any crackdown.

RIGHTEOUS DEMANDS

All the while, people around the world—especially in the United States—worked for his release. Foremost among them was Christina, who followed in the tradition of Avital Sharansky and many other wives of political prisoners. The U.S. Congress passed resolutions. President Bush raised the issue with his Chinese counterpart at least three times, says Yang. And Yang was aware of all this activity in his behalf. It made him doubly determined to do something "excellent" while in prison. Like what? Like thinking and strategizing "all the more, night and day," about how to secure a decent future for China.

In September 2006, he was offered early release, but he refused to take it, because the government would not meet two conditions: He wanted the right to return, whenever he wanted—that is, he wanted a Chinese passport. And he wanted, before leaving China, to visit his father's grave. His father had gone to live in America in 1998, and, in 2004, had returned to China, to try to win Jian-li's release. He was then 94. He was too ill to see his son, however, and died in Shandong, aged 95. The authorities did not force Jian-li onto a plane back to the United States. They did not want an international incident. The prisoner served out his term, until April 27, 2007.

And he came back to the United States on August 18, having visited his father's grave, and carrying a valid Chinese passport. It expires in 2017. So, he can go back to China whenever he wants, right? Yang answers, "In theory."

Already, he is hard at work, once again leading the Foundation for China in the 21st Century. That foundation is short on cash but very long on spirit and intellect. With his two Ph.D.s and huge talent, Yang could have made a fortune in the private sector; but he has a different calling, simply put. He says that his five-year prison experience "had value": "I emerged from it a better person and a stronger person." Celebrations by Chinese in the United States have been jubilant and tearful. I believe I can tell that Yang has been through an ordeal; but I also know that he will fast resume his stride. He's getting to know his family again, and with his kids—now five years older than when they last saw him—it will take some time. But it will come. His English, once perfectly fluent, will return too. "My kids will have to teach me!" And it's getting better by the day.

Yang has a big aim for China: constitutional democracy, human rights, the rule of law. I mention that a lot of people think that Chinese people don't want such things—that notions such as freedom and democracy are Western, alien to the East. His response is a mixture of weariness, contempt, and utter refutation.

President Bush, in his much-attacked second inaugural address, said, "Democratic reformers facing repression, prison, or exile can know: America sees you for who you are: the future leaders of your free country." Is that true of Jian-li Yang? Is he a future leader of a free China? That may be too much to hope for, but he is without question a leader already. **NR**

SCIENCE

The Origin of Species, and Everything Else

Coping with evolution and religion

JIM MANZI

In the closing scene of the classic 1960 movie *Inherit the Wind*, Spencer Tracy holds a Bible in one hand and Darwin's *Origin of Species* in the other, smiles, claps them together, and puts them both under his arm as he walks out of the courtroom. This was an iconic encapsulation of the broader consensus of educated Americans of that era that we can accept both God and Darwin. In recent decades, however, the conservative coalition has become divided over the compatibility of faith and evolution.

Many people, including many scientists, have traditionally reconciled God with evolution by considering evolution to be a process created by God. Lately, this common-sense position has been attacked as happy-talk by scientific atheists who condescendingly argue that anyone who *really* understands evolution realizes that it implies atheism. Probably the most famous of these is Oxford's Richard Dawkins, Professor of the Public Understanding of Science, who has expounded this idea over more than 30 years in a series of bestselling books with increasingly direct titles from *The Selfish Gene* to *The Blind Watchmaker* to, most recently, *The God Delusion*.

Scientific atheists put forward two propositions as logically deducible from science: that evolution eliminates the need for a Creator, and that evolution has no ultimate goal or purpose. That known science implies either conclusion is a myth, both in the sense of being objectively false, and also in the sense of being a story that a community of believers tells itself in order to provide meaning and coherence to the lives of its members. Beneath a veneer of hyper-rationality, scientific atheists often see themselves in a deeply romantic light: as uniquely courageous in the face of unpleasant facts, and as bringers-of-fire to unenlightened humanity.

Not surprisingly, many philosophers and theologians have disputed the arguments raised by Dawkins and his allies. Most of this debate, unfortunately, engages with evolution only at a very abstract or metaphorical level, which lends itself to a lot of gassy talk. In order to evaluate the claims of

Mr. Manzi is the CEO of an applied-artificial-intelligence software company.

each group, we need to consider the mechanics of evolution.

To understand these mechanics, it's very helpful to look at an analogous system. So-called Genetic Algorithms (GAs) are computer-software implementations of the same kind of mathematics that takes place in the biological process of evolution. (Dawkins, in fact, devoted about 40 pages of *The Blind Watchmaker* to describing a primitive GA-type program that he wrote on his PC.) Today, GAs are widely deployed in artificial-intelligence computer programming to solve such prosaic engineering problems as optimally scheduling trucks on a delivery route or identifying the best combination of process-control settings to get maximum output from a factory.

EVOLUTION ON THE FACTORY FLOOR

Consider the example of a chemical plant with a control panel that has 100 on/off switches used to regulate the manufacturing process. You are given the task of finding the combination of switch settings that will generate the highest total output for the plant. How would you solve the problem? One obvious approach would be to run the plant briefly with each possible combination of switch settings and select the best one. Unfortunately, even in this very simplified example there are 2^{100} possible combinations. This is a surprisingly gigantic number—much larger, for instance, than the number of grains of sand on Earth. We could spend a million lifetimes trying various combinations of switches and never get to most of the possible combinations.

But there's a trick that can help us. Once we start to try combinations, we might begin to notice patterns like "when switches 17 and 84 are set to 'on,' production always increases when I put switch 53 to the 'off' position." Such insights could help us to narrow down our search, and get to the answer faster. This might not seem to be much help in the face of such an enormous number of possibilities, but the power of these rules is also surprising.

To illustrate this, think of a simple game: I pick a random whole number between one and a billion, and you try to guess it. If the only thing I tell you when you make each guess is whether you are right or wrong, you would have very little chance of guessing my number even if I let you guess non-stop for a year. If, however, I tell you whether each guess is high or low, there is a procedure that will get the exact answer within about 30 guesses. You should always guess 500 million first. For all subsequent guesses, you should always pick the mid-point of the remaining possibilities. If, for example, the response to your opening guess of 500 million is that you are too high, your next guess should be the mid-point of the remaining possibilities, or 250 million. If the response to this second guess is "too low," then your next guess should be the mid-point of 250 million and 500 million, or 375 million, and so on. You can find my number within about a minute.

A Genetic Algorithm works on roughly the same principle. Let's go back to our problem of the 2^{100} possible combinations of switch settings. We can use a Genetic Algorithm as an automated procedure to sort through the vast "search space" of possibilities—and thus home in quickly on the best one. This procedure has the same three elements as our procedure for guessing the number: a starting guess, a feedback measurement that gives some indication of how good any guess is, and an iterative method that exploits this feedback to improve subsequent guesses.

In order to establish the initial guess for the GA, imagine writing a vertical column of 100 zeroes and ones on a piece of paper. If we agree to let one="turn the switch on" and zero="turn the switch off," this could be used as a set of instructions for operating the chemical plant. The first of the hundred would tell us whether switch 1 should be on or off, the second would tell us what to do with switch 2, and so on all the way down to the 100th switch.

This is a pretty obvious analogy to what happens with biological organisms and their genetic codes—and therefore, in a GA, we refer to this list as a "genome."

Our goal, then, is to find the "genome" that will lead the plant to run at maximum output. The algorithm creates an initial

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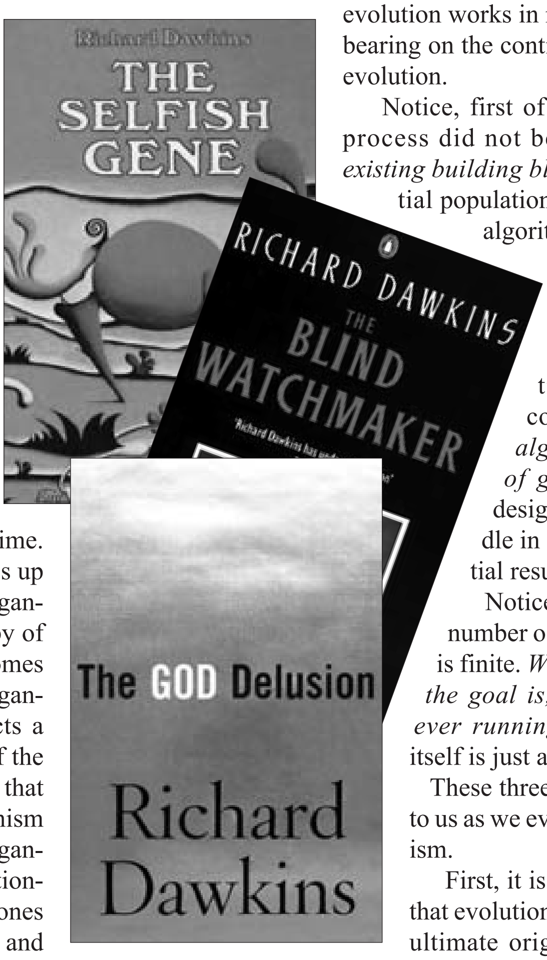
bunch of guesses—genomes—by randomly generating, say, 1,000 strings of 100 zeros and ones. We then do 1,000 sequential production runs at the factory, by setting the switches in the plant to the combination of settings indicated by each genome and measuring the output of the plant for each; this measured output is termed the "fitness value." (Typically, in fact, we construct a software-based simulation of the factory that allows us to run such tests more rapidly.) Next, the program selects the 500 of the 1,000 organisms that have the lowest fitness values and eliminates them. This is the feedback measurement in our algorithm—and it is directly analogous to the competition for survival of biological entities.

Next comes the algorithmic process for generating *new* guesses, which has two major components: crossover and mutation. *These components are directly modeled on the biological process of reproduction.* First, the 500 surviving organisms are randomly paired off into 250 pairs of mates. The GA then proceeds through these pairs of organisms one at a time. For each pair it flips a coin. If the coin comes up heads, then organism A "reproduces" with organism B by simply creating one additional copy of each; this is called direct replication. If it comes up tails, then organism A reproduces with organism B via "crossover": The program selects a random "crossover point," say at the 34th of the 100 positions, and then creates one offspring that has the string of zeroes and ones from organism A up to the crossover point and those from organism B after the crossover point, and an additional offspring that has the string of zeroes and ones from organism B up to the crossover point and those from organism A after the crossover point. The 500 resulting offspring are added to the population of 500 surviving parents to create a new population of 1,000 organisms. Finally, a soupçon of mutation is added by randomly flipping roughly every 10,000th digit from zero to one or vice versa.

The new generation is now complete. Fitness is evaluated for each, the bottom 500 are eliminated, and the surviving 500 reproduce through the same process of direct replication, crossover, and mutation to create the subsequent generation. This cycle is repeated over and over again through many generations. The average fitness value of the population moves upward through these iterations, and the algorithm, in fits and starts, closes in on the best solution.



THE DIVINE PROGRAM

This seems like a laborious process—but it works: It helps us get the factory to very high output much faster than we could otherwise. Computer scientists were inspired to do it this way because they observed the same three fundamental algorithmic operators—selection, crossover, and mutation—accomplish a similar task in the natural world. That such a comparatively simple concept can explain so much about the way nature works is what makes genetic evolution a scientific paradigm of stupendous beauty and power. As Leonardo famously put it, simplicity is the highest form of sophistication.

And if we look closely at how a Genetic Algorithm works in the factory, we can glean some important insights about how evolution works in nature—insights that have a direct bearing on the continuing controversy about God and evolution.

Notice, first of all, that our factory "evolution" process did not begin *ex nihilo. It required preexisting building blocks*—both in the form of an initial population and in the underlying rules of the algorithm itself.

Notice, second, that one of the 2^{100} possible combinations of switch settings will produce the highest output, and with enough time the algorithm will always converge on this one answer. *The algorithm is therefore the opposite of goallesss:* It is, rather, a device designed to tend toward a specific needle in a haystack—the single best potential result.

Notice, third and finally, that though the number of possible solutions is very large, it is finite. *With sufficient computational power the goal is, in principle, knowable without ever running the algorithm.* The algorithm itself is just a computational convenience.

These three observations will be very helpful to us as we evaluate the myths of scientific atheism.

First, it is obvious from the factory analogy that evolution does not eliminate the problem of ultimate origins—of what, in explicitly religious terms, is called Creation. Dawkins himself, in *The Blind Watchmaker*, is clear about the fact that evolution requires preexisting building blocks. He writes: "The physicist's problem is the problem of ultimate origins and ultimate natural laws. The biologist's problem is the problem of complexity. The biologist tries to explain the workings, and the coming into existence, of complex things, in terms of simpler things. He can regard his task as done when he has arrived at entities so simple that they can safely be handed over to the physicists."

Dawkins, then, has punted the problem to the physicists. Specifically, he cites *The Creation*, a book by Oxford physics professor Peter Atkins that addresses this question. Dawkins says that Atkins claims the original units of creation do not demand anything as grand as a Creator. But Atkins has come to have second thoughts. In a speech in Edinburgh earlier this year, Atkins had this to say: "I must admit that we simply do not know how the universe can come into being without intervention."

This is where the game of pass-the-parcel winds up in a dead end—as, eventually, it must. A scientific theory is a falsifiable rule that relates cause to effect. If you push Dawkins and com-

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pany far enough, you find yourself more or less where Aristotle was more than 2,000 years ago in stating his view that any chain of cause-and-effect must ultimately begin with an Uncaused Cause. No matter how far science advances, an explanation of ultimate origins must always—by the very definition of the scientific method—remain a non-scientific question.

A second prominent myth of scientific atheism is that evolution has no goal. Quite the opposite, of course, was true of the algorithm we used to optimize the factory. Evolution in nature is more complicated—but the complications don't mean that the process is goalless, just that determining this goal would be so incomprehensibly hard that in practice it falls into the realm of philosophy rather than science.

One important complication is that evolution in nature proceeds against a more complex fitness function than "see how much output this factory creates." The natural fitness landscape is defined by survival and reproduction, and it is constantly changing as the environment changes—for example, as new species arise or the climate becomes colder. It is prohibitively difficult to calculate the result of this process—but it is, in principle, calculable; the fitness landscape, after all, is only the product of the interaction of other physical processes.

A second major complication is that genetic strings in nature have complex structures and can evolve to some arbitrary length—unlike our factory example, where the simple "genetic string" had a fixed length of 100 positions. But, even in nature, the string must always have a finite length, as regulated by physical laws; and therefore the total number of potential combinations of genetic components remains finite. Dawkins says repeatedly that the number of possible genetic combinations is "all but infinite," but this is just a very loaded way of saying "finite."

The combination of a constantly changing fitness landscape and an extraordinarily large number of possible genomes means that scientists appropriately proceed *as if* the goal of evolution were incalculable, while from a philosophical perspective it remains calculable in principle, using only the information embedded in the initial conditions.

And here it's especially important that we be clear about our terms. The scientific atheists sweep a lot of philosophical baggage into the term "random": It is often used loosely to imply a senselessness, a basic lack of understandability, in natural occurrences. But in fact, even the "random" elements of evolution that influence the path it takes toward its goal—for example, mutation and crossover—are really pseudo-random. For example, if a specific mutation is caused by radiation hitting a nucleotide, both the radiation and its effect on the nucleotide are governed by normal physical laws. Human uncertainty in describing evolution, which as a practical matter we refer to as randomness, is reducible entirely to the impracticality of building a model that comprehensively considers things such as the idiosyncratic path of every photon in the universe compounded by the quantum-mechanistic uncertainty present in fundamental physical laws that govern the motion of such particles. As a practical matter, we lack the capability to compute either the goal or the path of evolution, but that is a comment about our limitations as observers, not about the process itself.

Accepting evolution, therefore, requires neither the denial of a Creator nor the loss of the idea of ultimate purpose. It resolves neither issue for us one way or the other.

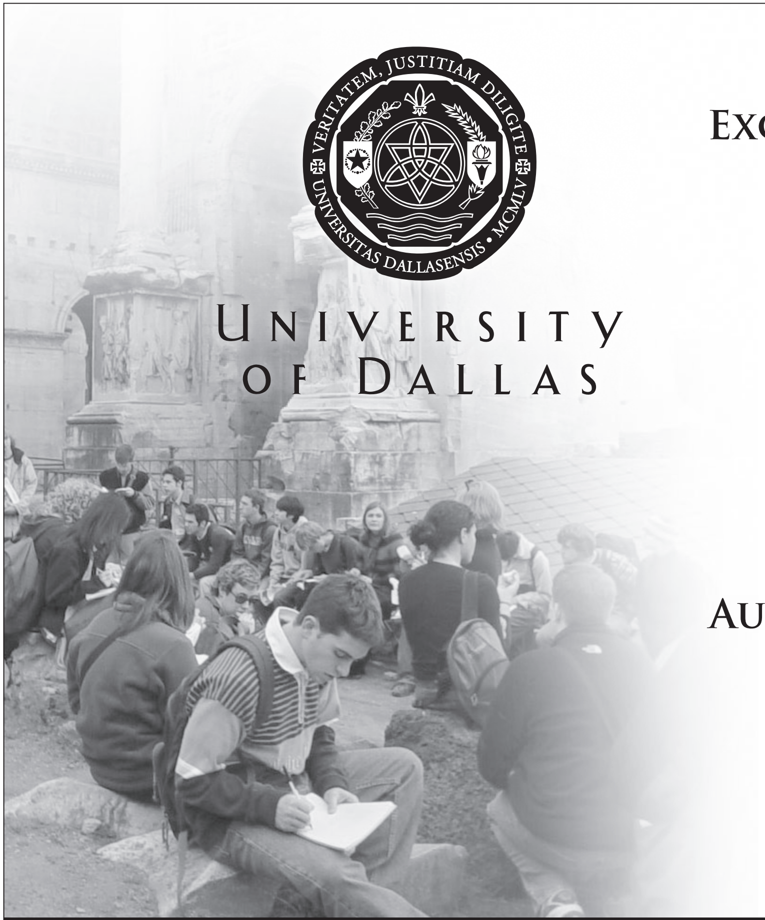
But evolution has been empirically associated with materialism for a reason: It undermines some traditional religious notions. Contemplating a Creator who acts through a process as multi-layered as evolution tends to lead us to see the spiritual world in an increasingly abstract light. The risk to religion is that this accommodation can begin an inexorable process that leads to a theology so attenuated that it becomes vanishingly close to materialism.

No matter how far science advances, an explanation of ultimate origins must always—by the very definition of the scientific method—remain a non-scientific question.

Fortunately, it is possible to thread the intellectual needle: to defer to scientific explanations for non-ultimate physical processes, while still remaining within the central Judeo-Christian tradition.

One of the advantages of institutionalized religion is that it conserves insight. Ironically, dealing with evolution places us back in the company of Augustine and Aquinas, who were both forced to figure out how to reconcile powerful proto-scientific ideas with Christianity. They described God as acting through laws or processes. In about the year 400, Augustine described a view of Creation in which "seeds of potentiality" were established by God, which then unfolded through time in an incomprehensibly complicated set of processes. In the 13th century, Aquinas—working with the thought of Aristotle and Augustine—identified God with ultimate causes, while accepting naturalistic interpretations of secondary causes. Neither Augustine nor Aquinas was a proto-Darwinist: Augustine, for example, thought species were immutable. What is striking about both of them, however, is their insistence on understanding and incorporating the best available non-theological thinking into our religious views.

Relying on this deep intellectual heritage, most major denominations in the Western world have accepted evolution as fully consistent with theistic religious faith. Thoughtful conservatives would be wise to agree. **NR**



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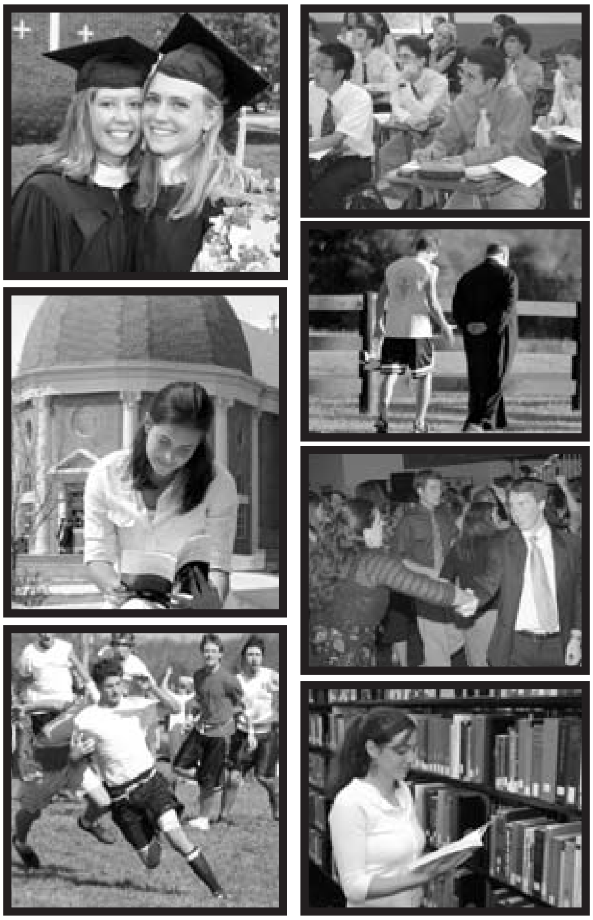

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Preschool for All!

Hillary and others drive for ‘universal preschool’

JOHN J. MILLER

Last May, just as the academic year was wrapping up, Hillary Clinton stopped by a Miami Beach elementary school to say that she wanted to define school down. “As president, I will establish universal prekindergarten education,” she promised, so that “every four-year-old child in America” can attend a government-funded preschool.

Her $10 billion proposal essentially would add a whole new grade onto the front end of the K–12 system. It’s one of the liberals’ hottest policy ideas, pushed by their think tanks and embraced by their politicians. “We expect that all of the presidential candidates will be talking about it,” says Libby Doggett, executive director of Pre-K Now, an advocacy organization. Wealthy foundations, such as the $5.6 billion Pew Charitable Trusts, are bankrolling the concept. Democratic governors also have made it a priority: Eliot Spitzer of New York has promised universal preschool by 2011, and Rod Blagojevich of Illinois wants public preschool not only for four-year-olds but for three-year-olds as well. In the last two years, states have boosted their preschool budgets by more than $1 billion.

The author Robert Fulghum has built a career on the motto “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.” Yet the supporters of universal preschool worry that kindergarten comes too late—and believe that shunting children into government-run nursery schools around the time that they’re potty training is a key to success in life. They say it leads to academic achievement, economic productivity, and law-abiding lifestyles. “There’s a lot of evidence that this saves money over the long run,” claimed Senator Clinton on the *Today* show.

Unfortunately for the nanny-statists, almost none of this is true. There’s no doubt that preschool has the potential to help some children, especially poor ones, but its benefits for most kids range from short-term to nonexistent. “The last thing we need is a one-size-fits-all policy,” says the Goldwater Institute’s Darcy Olsen, who coauthored a comprehensive report on preschool for the Reason Foundation. “Yet we’re looking at the biggest expansion of government into education since the creation of public schools.”

A generation ago, only a small minority of kids went to preschool: In 1965, just 5 percent of three-year-olds and 16 percent of four-year-olds attended. Since then, preschool has become a booming business. Nowadays, more than 40 percent of three-year-olds and more than two-thirds of four-year-olds are enrolled, according to federal statistics. Although public programs such as Head Start have encouraged this trend, the sector is dominated by private actors: parents who pay out of pocket, YMCAs and churches that run preschools in their basements, and for-profit centers that hope to meet a growing demand.

The cheerleaders of universal preschool aim to capture this thriving market. Ready or not, here they come: Janet Napolitano, the Democratic governor of Arizona, has said that her goal is nothing less than “ensconcing early care and education as a lockstep component of public schooling.”

IF IT AIN’T BROKE . . .

The irony is that early education is already an American strength. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that vast majorities of children enter kindergarten ready to learn: They recognize numbers, they can count to ten, and although most of them aren’t literate they grasp a few fundamentals about letters and reading. During the 1990s, even as Americans became less likely to read books, parents actually increased the rate at which they read books to preschoolers.

Perhaps this is one reason that young children perform well when compared with kids in other countries. On recent standardized language tests, fourth graders finished north of the 70th percentile, topping their peers in 26 of 35 countries. They also scored above average in math and science. “There’s room for improvement, but

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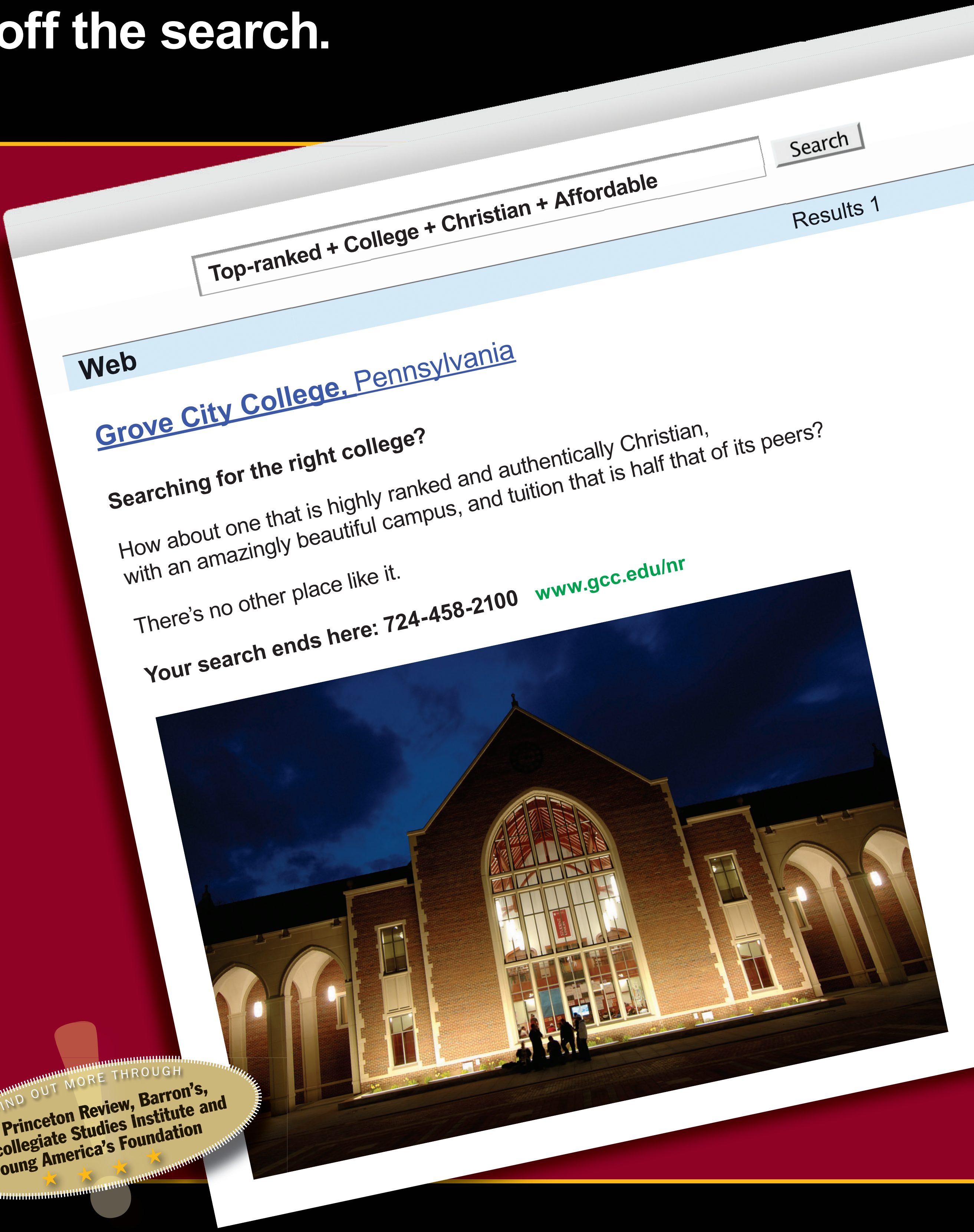

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this system certainly isn't broken," says Lisa Snell of the Reason Foundation. "It's basically working just fine." Problems set in as these children leave elementary schools and enter middle school. By the time they're in the eighth grade, their achievement is at best average. In the twelfth grade, it's mediocre.

This hardly makes the case for a government takeover of early education. If anything, it's an argument for reform of the upper grades—and probably in the direction of market-based alternatives that weaken government's near monopoly on K–12 schools. Anything else is a misbegotten priority.

The universal preschoolers, however, won't stop overselling their agenda. Senator Clinton has linked nursery-school attendance to lower crime rates. Last year, Isabel Sawhill, a former budget official in the Clinton administration, claimed that the advent of universal preschool would cause the GDP to rise by almost $1 trillion over the next 60 years.

Advocates make these flamboyant claims by taking wisps of data and warping them beyond recognition. Typically, that means focusing on a small-scale experiment conducted under precise circumstances and drawing completely unwarranted extrapolations from it. The most famous of these involves a preschool in Ypsilanti, Mich., in the early 1960s—a test case that universal-preschool partisans and their media handmaidens have gone on to mythologize.

The 123 kids who took part in the Perry Preschool Project weren't at all ordinary: They were black, poor, and had low IQs. Researchers described them as prone to "retarded intellectual development and eventual school failure." About half were sorted into a gold-plated preschool program. The rest were put into a control group. They've been tracked ever since, in a longitudinal study. Those who went to preschool—where they encountered highly trained instructors, low teacher-to-student ratios, and a regime of home visits—appear to have benefited. Over time, they've been more likely to finish college and less likely to be arrested or get pregnant as teenagers. A common interpretation of this result is that a healthy preschool experience put these at-risk kids into the right frame of mind for kindergarten, where they met teachers who responded positively to their readiness, which in turn helped them make a more substantial commitment to their own education.

Whatever the explanation, it's far from obvious that Perry Preschool holds any lessons for large-scale public policy. "Boutique preschools that serve poor children aren't realistic models for everybody else," says Bruce Fuller, a UC-Berkeley education professor who is the author of *Standardized Childhood*, a thorough survey of preschooling. He points out that the Perry experiment came with a high price tag: more than $15,000 per child in 2000 dollars. That's almost four times the cost of preschool in Oklahoma, which is one of three states to have a government-sponsored universal-preschool program (the others are Florida and Georgia). When the latest assessment of Perry preschoolers came out in 2005, researchers described an ongoing benefit, though not an eye-popping one. As summarized by Fuller, "Exposure to Perry explains less than 3 percent of all the variation in earnings at age forty, and about 4 percent of the variability in school attainment levels."

This is an important finding, though it's difficult to see how attempting to replicate it might add a trillion bucks to national GDP. As it happens, several other experiments have tried to repeat it and failed. One reason may be that the kids in the Perry experiment's control group didn't have an alternative to staying at home because the preschool industry that flourishes today hadn't been born. By contrast, a control group today would have many options. This hasn't stopped universal-preschool advocates from claiming that it takes a Perry Preschool to raise a child, or that all preschools can be Perry Preschools. "It's intellectually dishonest—they're just way out in front of the evidence," says Fuller, who describes himself as "an aging, left-of-center Berkeley academic."

One lesson from Perry and several other studies is that preschool really can help certain kinds of kids—especially those who come from homes where Cartoon Network blares from the television all day and nobody ever opens a copy of *Goodnight Moon*. The simple act of removing children from bad environments and placing them in better ones for a few hours each week can make a modest difference. For these unlucky kids, preschool may be critical, and public investments have a practical logic.

A MATTER OF PRIORITIES

For the most part, however, universal preschool is an expensive solution to a problem that doesn't exist. Even when preschool appears to have a positive effect on middle-class kids, the benefits wear off shortly after they enter elementary school. "It's a continuing problem," says Ron Haskins of the Brookings Institution. And it prompts a question: Why commit resources to universal-preschool schemes when the K–12 system appears unable to leverage them? Darcy Olsen says, "Until we get the next 13 grades right, it just doesn't make sense to add more of the same."

When confronted by hard facts, the leaders of the universal-preschool movement prefer to close their eyes, cover their ears, and utter their talking points. "All children make phenomenal gains," says Pre-K Now's Doggett (who is the wife of Democratic congressman Lloyd Doggett of Texas). What about the research of Fuller and other scholars? "They're wrong," she says.

It would be bad enough if universal preschool merely wasted taxpayer dollars. But its unintended consequences could do more harm. For some children, there's such a thing as too much preschool—there are indications that it leads to increased aggression, especially among middle-class children. Last year, Canada's C. D. Howe Institute published a critique of universal preschool in Quebec. "We studied a wide range of measures of child well-being from anxiety to hyperactivity to social and motor skills," wrote the authors. In almost every instance, they found that kids were "worse off." Boys may present special challenges. As psychologist Leonard Sax points out in *Boys Adrift*, the initial experience of school is often a bad one for boys because the language centers of their brains don't develop as quickly as they do in girls. Overexposure to preschool could possibly turn them off to education, in a sort of reverse Perry effect.

"What middle-class parents need to understand is that an average or below-average preschool can be worse for their kids than what most of them can provide in

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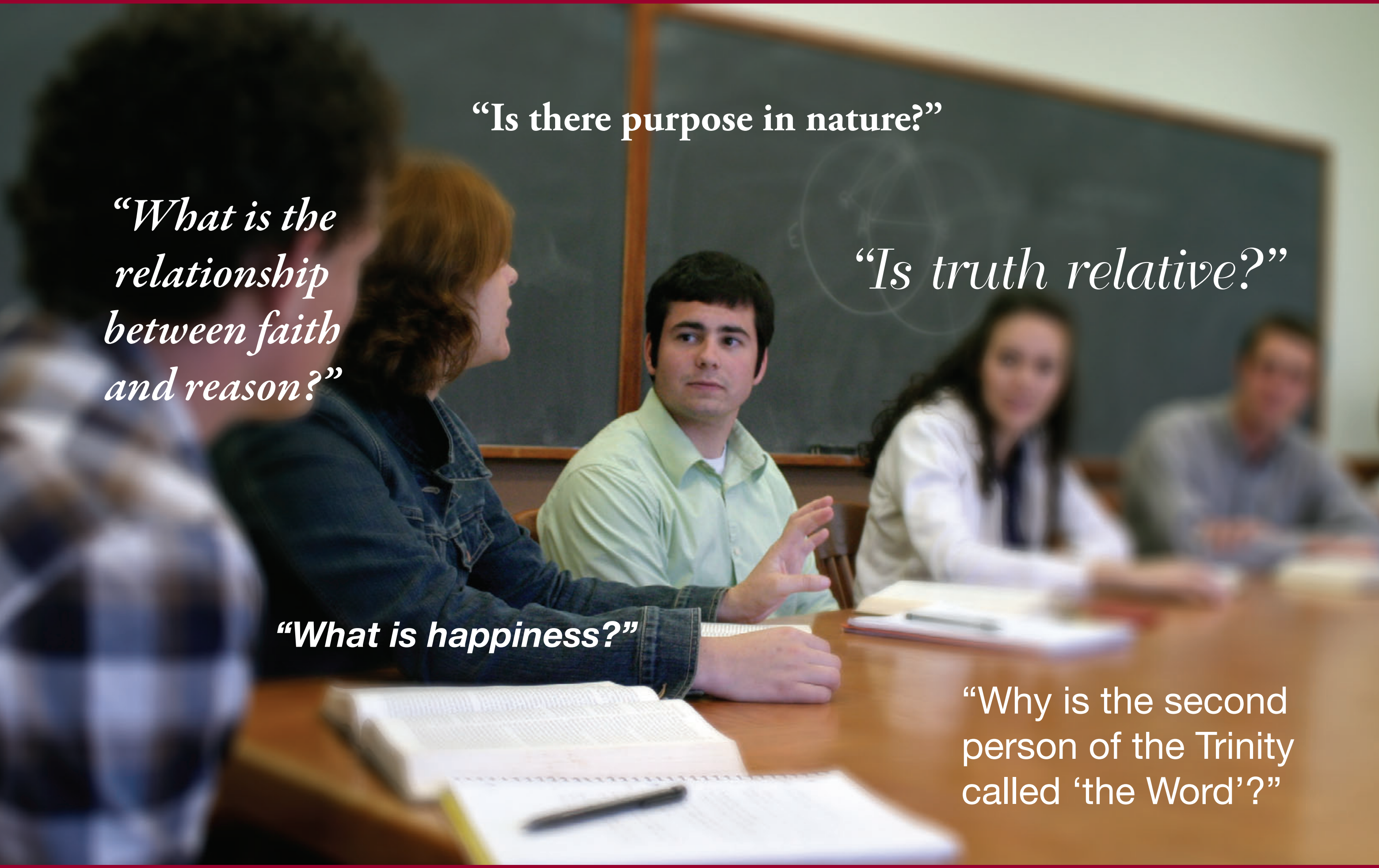
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their own homes," says one preschool expert. "That's not true for a lot of low-income families, where the parenting skills aren't as good."

Then there's the troubling economics of universal preschool. Teacher unions would enjoy a growth spurt. If government-funded preschools begin to drive out private providers and become a middle-class entitlement, they could reshuffle the most talented teachers, encouraging them to move from existing programs that serve at-risk children to new ones that serve the well off—i.e., they could migrate away from where they're needed to where they aren't.

There would also be a harmful ripple effect on care for infants and toddlers. At many childcare centers, services for the youngest kids function as loss leaders because they require more adults per child. Classrooms of three- and four-year-olds, which require fewer adults per child, actually subsidize them. "If public schools become the primary points of delivery for four-year-olds, the costs of infant and toddler care, already expensive and in short supply, will shoot up," says Eric Karolak of the Early Care and Education Consortium. Parents would foot the bill.

The good news is that efforts to install universal preschool aren't inevitable. In California last year, voters considered Proposition 82, an initiative pushed by moviemaker Rob Reiner. It would have hiked taxes on high earners by $2.4 billion to fund state-run preschools. It failed by a three-to-two margin. "It was complicated, inflexible, and the finances just didn't make sense," says Lisa Snell. She calculated that, because 66 percent of the state's four-year-olds are already in preschool, meeting the initiative's goal of enrolling 70 percent of them would have increased the number of kids in preschool by only 22,000—at a taxpayer cost of $109,000 per child.

As with so many policy matters, this one ultimately boils down to something other than dollars and cents or the findings of social scientists. It's about fundamental philosophies of government and the duties of citizenship. Whose responsibility is it to raise small children? Hillary Clinton has offered her answer. It remains to be seen whether her Republican rivals will present a different vision. **NR**

How to Fix the Universities

Not easy, if you don't have tanks

ROGER KIMBALL

FOR quite a while now, whenever I've thought about the job of "reforming" or "retaking" the university, a little voice emerges to ask, "Are you mad?" For the most part, intelligent opinion about the problem of reforming the university is divided into two camps. There are those who think it cannot be done, that the university is beyond redemption, and that more's the pity. And there are those who think that it cannot be done, that the university is beyond redemption, and that it doesn't matter.

Of course, those alternatives do not exhaust the options. Shortly after I wrote an essay on the subject of "Retaking the University" in *The New Criterion*, one thoughtful Internet commentator responded with an alternative that I must have had somewhere in the back of my mind but had never articulated explicitly. This forthright chap began by recalling an article on military affairs that poked fun at yesterday's conventional wisdom that high-tech gear would render tanks and old-fashioned armor obsolete. Whatever else the war in Iraq showed, it was a demonstration that tried and true military hardware was anything but obsolete. The moral is: Some armor is good, more armor is better. "It makes sense," this fellow concluded, "to have some tanks handy."

And with this, he segued into my piece on the university, outlining some of the criticisms and recommendations I'd made. By and large, he agreed with the criticisms, but he found my recommendations much too tame. "Try as I might," he wrote, "I just can't see meaningful change of the academic monstrosity our universities have become issuing from faculties, parents, alumni, and trustees." What was his alternative? In a word, tanks. He called his plan Operation Academic Freedom, and I think you will agree that it has that virtue of simplicity which William of Occam famously recommended. Here's the plan:

> We round up every tank we can find that isn't actually being used in Iraq or Afghanistan. Next, we conduct a nationwide Internet poll to determine which institutions need to be retaken first . . .
>
> The actual battle plan is pretty simple. We drive our tanks up to the front doors of the universities and start shooting. Timing is important. We'll have to wait till 11 A.M. or so, or else there won't be anyone in class. Ammunition is important. We'll need lots and lots of it. The firing plan is to keep blasting until there's nothing left but smoldering ruins. Then we go on to the next on the list. If the first target is Harvard, for example, we would move on from there to, say, Yale. So fuel will be important too. There's going to be some long-distance driving involved between engagements.

Well, perhaps we can agree to call that Plan B, a handy recourse if other proposals don't pan out.

And there have, let's face it, been plenty of other proposals. Indeed, the task of reforming higher education has become a vibrant cottage industry, with think tanks, conferences, and special programs, institutes, and initiatives cropping up like mushrooms after a rain. I think, for example, of the Manhattan Institute's Center for the American University, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, Robert George's James Madison Program at Princeton University, and an upcoming conference in New York to mark the 20th anniversary of Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind.*

Naturally, many of these initiatives—those whose home is at a college or university, anyway—run into stiff resistance. When a couple of dissident professors at Hamilton College wanted to start a center named for Alexander Hamilton and dedicated to "excellence in scholarship through the study of freedom, democracy, and capitalism," the roof caved in on them. You remember Hamilton College. It's the

Mr. Kimball is co-editor and co-publisher of *The New Criterion.*

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wretched place that was only too happy to invite the "post-porn feminist" Annie Sprinkle to campus to demonstrate sex toys for the young scholars, that wanted Susan Rosenberg—the former Weather Underground member whose 58-year sentence was commuted by Bill Clinton on his last day in office—to be an "artist- and activist-in-residence," and that asked Ward "Little Eichmanns" Churchill to enlighten Hamilton students about 9/11 and American culture. But just let someone try celebrating the *achievements* of America and, bang, the predominantly left-wing faculty at Hamilton, terrified that there might be an initiative they don't control, start whining about "governance" and "accountability." Fifteen minutes later, the administration capitulates and kills the center.

This particular story has a happy ending, however, because the Alexander Hamilton Center for the Study of Western Civilization went ahead anyway—but not at Hamilton College. It's just down the street in Clinton, N.Y., in the old Alexander Hamilton Inn, a separate educational entity with no official ties to the college.

I applaud all of these initiatives—indeed, am involved with several of them. I suspect, however, that they will remain minority enterprises, a handful of gadflies buzzing about the left-lunging behemoth that is contemporary academia.

There are several reasons for this. One is that the left-wing monoculture is simply too deeply entrenched for these initiatives, laudable and necessary though they are, to make much difference. For the last few years, I have heard several commentators from sundry ideological points of view say that the reign of political correctness and programmatic leftism on campus had peaked and was about to recede. I wish I could share that optimism, but I see no evidence to support it. Sure, students are quiescent. But indifference is not instauration, and, besides, faculties nearly everywhere form a self-perpetuating closed shop.

It is the same with the fashion of "theory"—all that anemic, sex-in-the-head, politicized gibberish dressed up in reader-proof "philosophical" prose. It is true that names like Derrida and Foucault no longer produce the frisson of excitement they once did. Yet that is not because their "ideas" are widely disputed, but rather because they are by now completely absorbed into the tissues of academic life. (Something similar happened with Freud a couple decades ago: His toxic ideas, once passionate assertions, became commonplace assumptions.)

A few years ago, *The American Enterprise* magazine created a small stir when it published "The Shame of America's One-Party Campuses," providing some statistical evidence to bolster what everyone already knew: that American colleges and universities were overwhelmingly left-wing. That's all old hat now. Just a couple weeks ago, the *Yale Daily News* ran a story revealing that faculty and staff at Yale this year have contributed 45 times more to Democratic candidates than to Republicans. "Most people in my department," said the one academic known to have contributed to the Giuliani campaign, "are slightly to the left of Josef Stalin."

The key issue, I hasten to add, is not partisan politics but rather the subordinating of intellectual life to non-intellectual (i.e., political) imperatives. "The greatest danger is the invasion of an intellectual fashion which wants to abolish cognitive criteria of knowledge and truth itself," wrote the philosopher Leszek Kolakowski in his essay "What Are Universities For?" He added, "The humanities and social sciences have always succumbed to various fashions, and this seems inevitable. But this is probably the first time that we are dealing with a fashion, or rather fashions, according to which there are no generally valid intellectual criteria." Indeed, it is this failure to check the colonization of intellectual life by politics that fuels the degradation of liberal education. The issue is not so much—or not only—the presence of bad politics as it is the absence of non-politics in the intellectual life of the university.

I used to think that going over the heads of the faculty and appealing to trustees, parents, alumni, and other concerned groups could make a difference. I have become increasingly less sanguine about that strategy. For one thing, it is extremely difficult to generate a sense of emergency such that those groups will actually take action, let alone maintain that sense of emergency along the path from indignation to concrete action.

What's more, trustees, parents, and alumni are increasingly impotent. Once, a prospective hiccup in the annual fund would send shivers down the spine of an anxious college president. These days, as James Piereson pointed out in *The Weekly Standard*, many colleges and universities are so rich that they can afford to cock a snook at parents and alumni. Forget about Harvard and its $30 billion, or Princeton or Yale, or Stanford, or the other super-rich schools. Even many small colleges are sitting on huge fortunes.

Consider tiny Hamilton College again. When I reported on the Susan Rosenberg case in the *Wall Street Journal*, the story appeared the day that Hamilton kicked off a capital campaign at the New-York Historical Society. My article was highly critical and it generated a lot of comment. Donations to Hamilton, I am told, simply dried up. But so what? The college sits on an endowment of some $770 million. That is over half a *billion* dollars. So what if its annual fund is down a few million this year? They can afford to hunker down and wait out the storm.

Some observers believe that the university cannot really be reformed until the current generation—the Sixties generation—retires from faculties. That's another couple of decades, minimum. But in any event, deep and lasting change in the university depends on deep and lasting change in the culture at large. Undertaking that task is a tall order. Criticism, satire, and ridicule all have an important role to play, but the point is that such criticism, to be successful, depends upon possessing an alternative vision of the good.

Do we possess that alternative vision? I believe we do. We all know, well enough, what a good liberal education looks like, just as we all know, well enough, what makes for a healthy society. It really isn't that complicated. It doesn't take a lot of money or sophistication. What it does require is candor and courage, moral virtues that are scarce wherever political correctness reigns triumphant. In large part, those who want to retake the university must devote themselves to a waiting game, capitalizing in the meanwhile on whatever opportunities present themselves. That is Plan A. Of course, it may fail; there are no guarantees. But in that case we can always avail ourselves of the more dramatic Plan B. **NR**

Do They Know Anything About Islam?

Rights and wrongs of multicultural ed

TRAVIS KAVULLA

I WAS in Cambridge, Mass., in February of last year when I heard the latest news out of Iraq: The al-Askari Mosque, the so-called "Golden Mosque" of Samarra, had been nearly leveled in a devastating explosion.

It was a Wednesday, and that night I attended my weekly seminar on Cambridge authors, led by James Russell, a prodigious member of Harvard's Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations department. He arrived late to class, and was not in the mood to talk about T. S. Eliot when he did. "Do any of you know what the Golden Mosque is?" he asked. Blank stares followed. Smart though they reputedly are, few Harvard undergraduates had heard of the mosque, or knew that it is one of Shiite Islam's most holy sites.

Professor Russell sighed, and his voice took on a mournful tone. "This war is something completely different than it was yesterday. The violence this is going to unleash will make the last few months look positively tranquil."

His warnings were prescient, but should not have seemed so gilded by expertise: Only the most cursory bits of knowledge about Islam and its sects were necessary to deduce the gravity of the crime and the reprisals it would inspire. But how many students had even this basic knowledge?

The answer is a sad one, especially for a university such as Harvard, which routinely trumpets its "international" character and insists its students are "generally educated": instructed not to be pre-packaged professionals, but to obtain a broad education that, supposedly, helps one understand our "global society."

Yet until the *New York Times* and *The Economist* told them otherwise, the attack on the Golden Mosque seemed a pedestrian event to my friends: one bombing in a troubled place where bombings are mundane. In the weeks after, I gently quizzed my friends and acquaintances. Did they know:

- The major theological differences between Sunnis and Shiites?
- The countries in the region with Sunni majorities?

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- Those with Shiite majorities?
- Some of the main pilgrimage sites in the Muslim world?
- Whether al-Qaeda was Sunni or Shiite?

This is a basic quiz, and its answers are highly pertinent to our modern world. But the results, while informal, spoke to an ignorance so grand as to render meaningless concerns over the margin of error. (And it is not just Harvard students who disappoint. The al-Qaeda question was posed last year to Silvestre Reyes, the Texas Democrat who now heads the House Intelligence Committee; he answered incorrectly.)

Learning the fundamentals of world religions still should be a pillar of a liberal education.

It is an oft-repeated criticism that schools have stopped teaching facts per se, touting instead grand theories that organize facts in a manner convenient to theorists' work. Nowhere is this truer than in "postcolonial" studies of the Middle East (as well as Africa and Latin America). In a college course on Islam, a student is more likely to be assigned Edward Said's historiography, as the theory and method of writing history is known, than an actual history textbook. Rarely will a student be held accountable for definitional knowledge—you don't need to know why Shiite Iranians call their religious leaders "ayatollahs," or even when Muhammad lived, but you had better understand how the emergence of Islam reshaped the gender structure of Arab society. There is a good case to be made for knowing *all* of that, but without the bare facts of people, places, and the dates they intersected, a critical analysis of same is useless. Learning this way is like wearing jeans with a button and a zipper, but no denim: quite impossible.

At times, the grandiose theorizing of academics is harmless, even amusing. But vis-à-vis Islam, students' ignorance is tragic, because, like it or not, we really do live in that much-prophesied global, interconnected world: What happens to a mosque, especially one in Iraq, may well have an impact on us and our cause. For as long a time as that is true, understanding cultures outside our own will be one of the foremost intellectual necessities.

This sounds flaky in the extreme to a good many conservatives. Indeed, their suspicion is well-placed—a true understanding of another culture is very different from the "understanding" fostered in higher education.

These days, to "understand" is rarely about obtaining specific knowledge about a foreign culture through patient study; usually, to "understand" is to excuse, or to change the subject. An example: One week at Harvard, not so long ago, there were no fewer than five panels bemoaning American "militarization," "imperialism," and supposed human-rights abuses. This, as it happened, was the same week when riots exploded across the globe in response to the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*'s publication of several cartoons depicting Muhammad. But a student would have tried in vain to find a panel addressing the question that obviously needed to be asked: Why was the Muslim world burning over a few cartoons, printed in an obscure source?

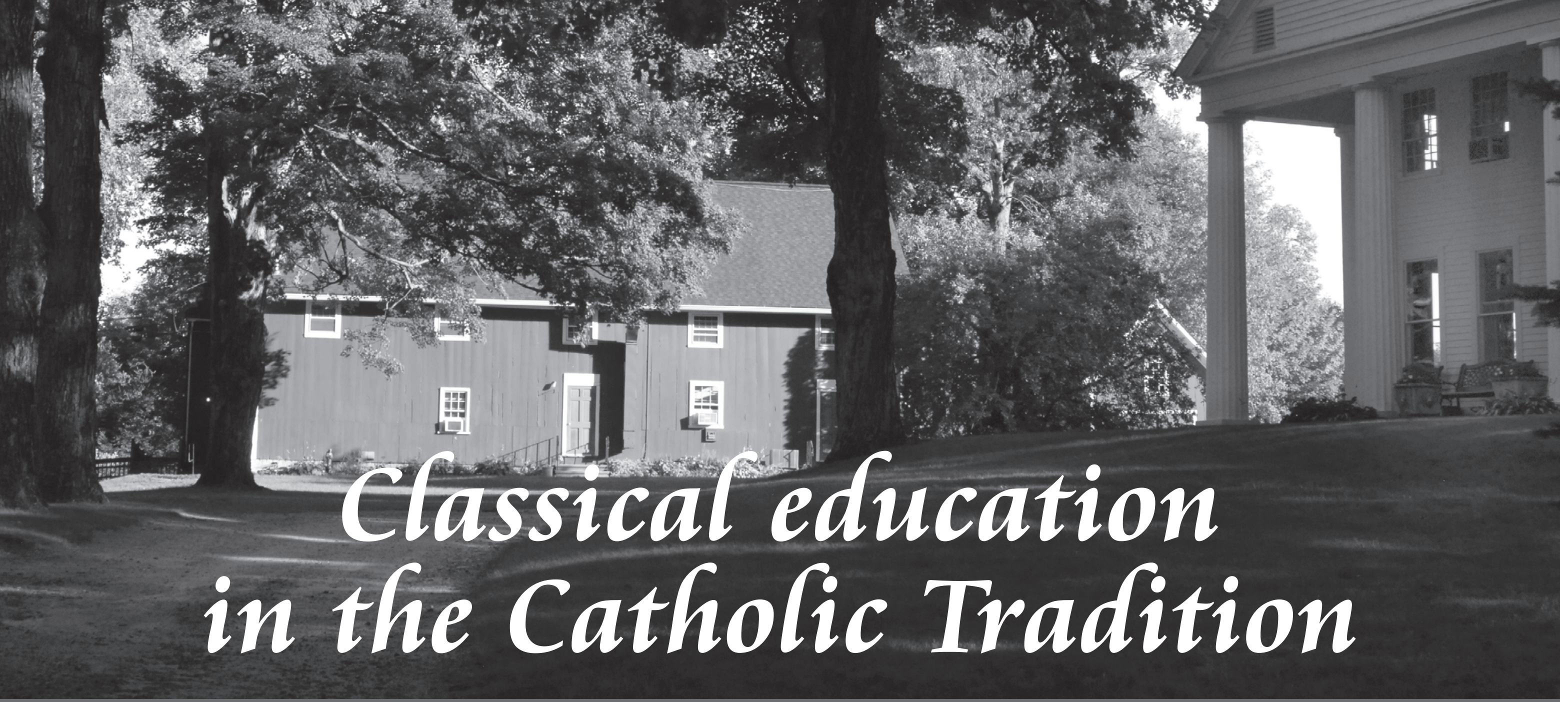
Apart from extracurricular panels, there is the question of coursework. Or, rather, there's not the question, at least for most students. Add Islam and Muslim society to the long list of subjects, from Shakespeare to American history, that Ivy Leaguers from Yale to Princeton to Harvard can avoid ever encountering in their academic careers. Although schools have moved to embrace "internationalism," this pedagogical vogue exists in portions so small as to be useless. In Harvard's latest curricular review, for instance, it is claimed to be a "serious commitment" to our "global society" that the university requires its students to take *one year* of a foreign language. Not enough to have a conversation or read a newspaper, but perhaps graduates will be able to order falafel at their nearest Lebanese restaurant.

Harvard undergraduates are also required to take one class chosen from a small but schizoid list of "Foreign Cultures" offerings. Incredibly, in the 2007–08 academic year, none of the "Foreign Cultures" courses concerns Islam or the Middle East. If a student does want to learn something about Islam and have it count for credit, he'll have to wait until next year. And then, he'll be faced with a choice between two. Will he take "Gendered Communities: Women, Islam, and Nationalism in the Middle East and North Africa," taught by the chairman of the department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality? Or will he select "Understanding Islam and Contemporary Muslim Societies"?

He would do well to choose neither. As comprehensive as "Understanding Islam" sounds, it hardly lives up to its grand name, digressing in pursuit of the professor's own passion. That would be Sufi mysticism in India and Africa, a topic that is as obscure as it is exculpatory of Islam's lately radical tendency. (Sufis are to Islam what Quakers are to Christianity.) In any case, Sufism has little to do with why, in the decade in which we live, a student would sign himself up for a course called "Understanding Islam."

Despite the pretense of "understanding" other cultures, or "respecting" or "being sensitive to" them, few universities have moved beyond the platitudinous. A real sensitivity for other cultures entails discerning their differences, perhaps even more than finding their common ground. What is *not* respectful of Islam would be to assume that those of its adherents who brook no separation of civil and religious authority would be motivated by the same, largely secular incentives that motivate us in the West. A person who truly understands Shiite Islam will be able to comprehend Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's millennial behavior and appreciate that he is perfectly serious in his belief that the twelfth Imam, whom God is said to have hidden from human view in the 9th century, will be reappearing soon to redeem the world for Islam.

For reasons that are even more obvious today than they were a century ago, learning the fundamentals of world religions still should be a pillar of a liberal education. A just-the-facts approach may seem pedantic and arcane to students who are themselves mostly agnostic. But in our time, it is not too much to ask that anyone who graduates from a prestigious American university have at least a functional knowledge of Islam and the Muslim world. This is the least effortful and most practical civic duty we can ask universities to bear. And if such a simple calling cannot be fulfilled, then American higher education will have further endangered its reputation as a useful institution. **NR**



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Choice for Me, but Not For Thee

Democratic presidential candidates and their kids' education

ROB LONG

THE presidential campaign season is a bit like the airport security line: We shuffle through endless switchback rows, barked at by bureaucrats ("Remove your belts! Read about my health-care plan!"), until finally, exhausted, we get through the ordeal and can sit quietly at the Cinnabon. The only really fun parts of the experience are the early ones, before the candidates have mastered the programmed, focus-grouped facial expressions to accompany their robo-responses to questions posed by friendly campaign workers planted in the audience.

A few weeks ago, during the YouTube debate, a mischievous American asked the assembled Democratic candidates a simple question: Where would you send your kids—to public school or private school?

It was enormously fun to watch five senators squirm their way through the complicated reasons that forced them to send their kids to private school. Senator Obama explained that his kids go to a private school at the University of Chicago, because he taught there. But, he added, "there are some terrific public schools in Chicago that they could be going to." It's just that, well . . . they're not.

Senator Biden explained that his sons went to Wilmington Friends School, where his sister was a teacher, following the death of his wife and daughter. Later, they went to a Catholic high school. It was an odd response: Here was a guy who clearly had nothing to apologize for—I'm ashamed to say that I didn't know this about Senator Biden; I'm even more ashamed to say that I like him a lot more now that I do know—still oozing self-justification.

Dennis Kucinich's daughter goes to public school, naturally. As do John Edwards's kids. The difference being that Kucinich's daughter probably isn't in the same league, net worth–wise, as Edwards's kids, so it probably matters a lot more to them. Put it this way: If Senator Edwards calls up, say, Brown University, and offers to donate a building one-half the size of the house he built for himself, the Edwards kids are *going to Brown*, even if the university has to assign some graduate student to teach them to read.

Senator Dodd's daughter, who is in kindergarten, is currently in public school. Which reminds me: Senator Dodd has a daughter in *kindergarten*! Senator Dodd is a *63-year-old* man. I'm not sure what I think about that—part of me thinks *yikes!*; part of me thinks *high five, old timer!*—but speaking from an actuarial perspective, Senator Dodd isn't going to be as involved in his daughter's education as time marches on.

As always, though, it was Senator Clinton who delivered the signature response. Clinton—whose daughter, Chelsea, famously attended the private Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C.—at first tried to stomp her way through the thickets. "We know," breezed debate host Anderson Cooper, "Senator Clinton, you sent your daughter to private school." Not so fast, Anderson. "No," she replied. "No?" he asked. And the rest of us thought: This is going to be interesting. Because we're all pretty sure that we remember Chelsea packing off to Sidwell Friends, but the fun part about having a Clinton around—either Clinton, really—will be moments like these, when we're treated to a masterful display of the Art of Explanation.

"Chelsea went to public schools, kindergarten through eighth grade, until we moved to Washington. And then I was advised . . . that if she were to go to a public school, the press would never leave her alone, because it's a public school. So I had to make a very difficult decision."

Look, let's all be really really honest here: Hillary Clinton is going to be president of the United States. At some point. So why not look for joy where we can find it? And answers like these guarantee that eight years of President Rodham (she's going to drop the Clinton on Inauguration Day; you knew that, right?) will be a treasure trove of this kind of thing: contorted non-responses laced with hilarious lies.

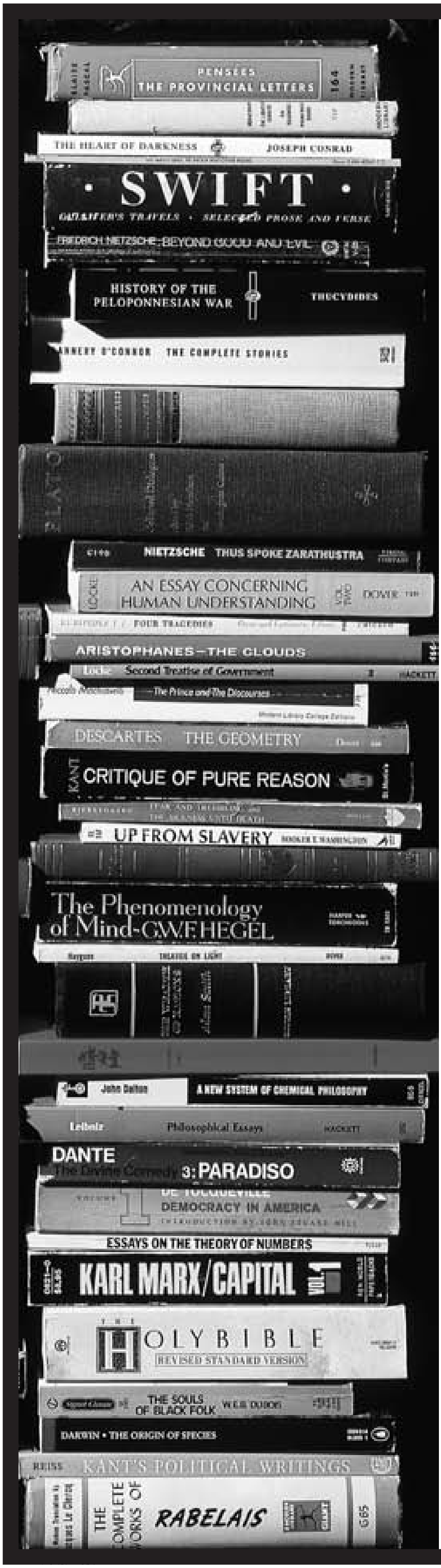
Let's unpack: *The press would never leave her alone, because it's a public school.* As Senator Clinton must know, the "public" in "public school" refers to its source of funding, not to the fact that the physical space is open to everyone, all the time. Public schools, in fact, are awfully hard to get into, what with the metal detectors and the armed guards. A well-equipped news van parked anywhere near a typical Washington, D.C., public school would be quickly stripped of its electronic goodies.

Sidwell Friends, on the other hand, peopled by the offspring of D.C.'s media and political elite, is a *funnel* for the very kind of attention Senator Clinton says she was trying to avoid. Chit-chat by the lockers gets passed around the Georgetown family dinner table and shared the next day at a *Washington Post* editorial get-together. So it's hard to believe that a smart, strategic thinker like the future President Rodham would make such a boneheaded error if all she wanted were for the press to leave Chelsea alone.

But the key word here is "decision." It was a "difficult decision" for the future President Rodham. And, as Senator Obama put it, there are other schools that his kids "could" go to. Senator Biden chose Catholic school for his kids because that was "important" to him. Edwards's kids go to public school, but Edwards is so rich he could send his kids anywhere he wants. The unspoken answer here—unspoken because it's uncomfortable and squirmy and doesn't test well—is that these parents, all of them, *made a choice*. For whatever odd reasons, they *chose* where they were going to send their kids.

It took a while for all of the candidates to outline their reasons for sending their kids where they do. Not one of them shrugged and said, "I sent them to the school in the district." Not one of them said, "We applied to the local magnet school, but we didn't get in." It was a pretty simple question, and as long-winded and tortured as the answers were, they came through loud and clear: We made a choice.

And the unspoken message: Do not try this at home. **NR**



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Rates low as a boa's belly,
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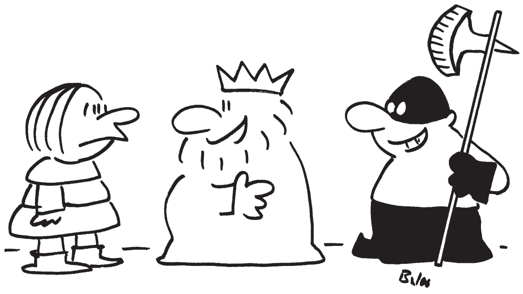
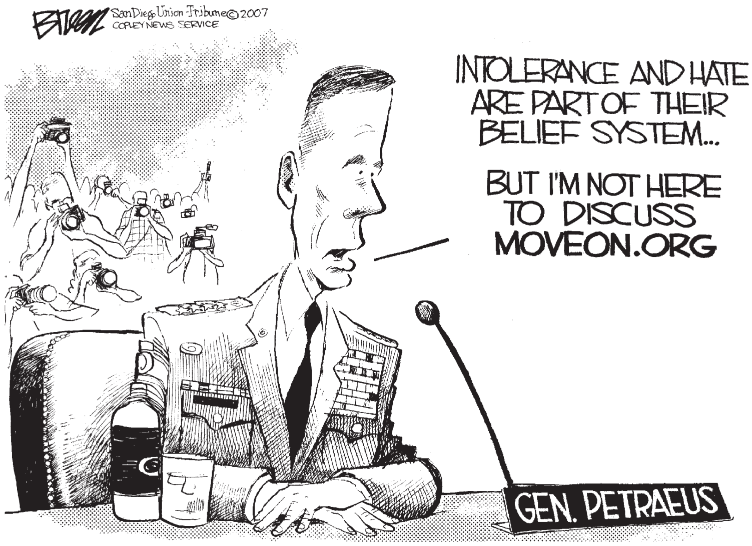
—W. H. von Dreele



"And Dubois, here, is in charge of due process."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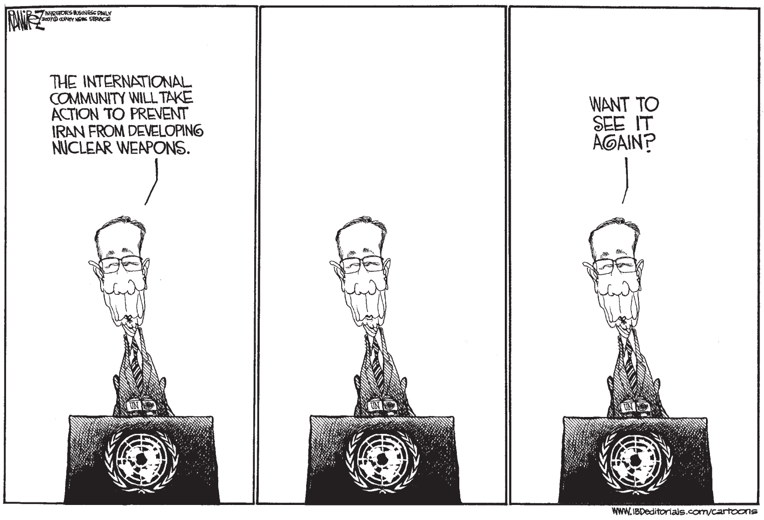
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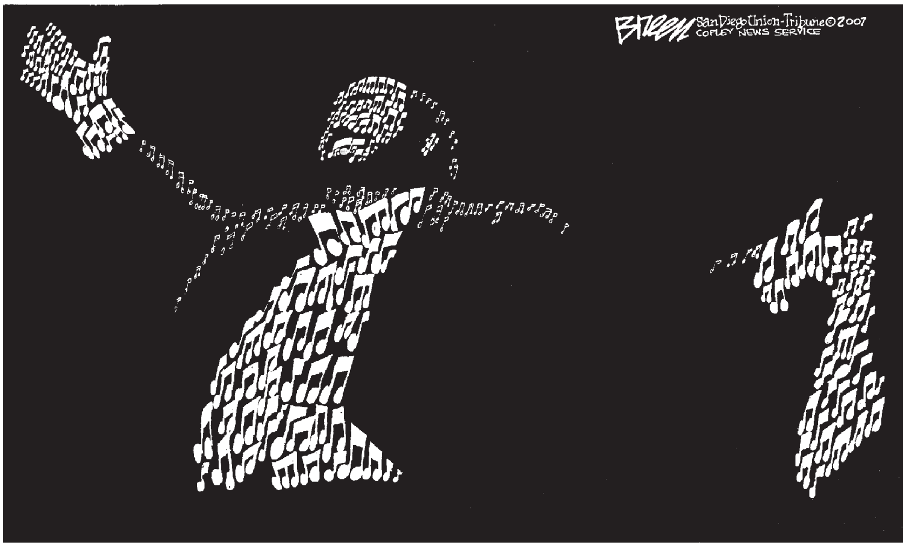
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LUCIANO PAVAROTTI
1935-2007

the long view

ROB LONG

NSA Surveillance Transcript
(Patriot Act–authorized)

[*static*]

NORMAN HSU: “Hello, this is Norman Hsu. How much do you need?”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Norman?”

NORMAN HSU: “Speaking. How much do you need?”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Hi! I’m calling from Senator Clinton’s office!”

NORMAN HSU: “Hello. How much do you need?”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Ha ha ha . . . Norman, I love your sense of humor. Actually, both I and the senator love your sense of humor.”

NORMAN HSU: “Thank you. How much do you need?”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Ha ha ha haha . . . just priceless. Priceless. Just . . . such fun . . . Anyway. No, but seriously, Norman, the senator wanted me to reach out to you and thank you personally for your amazing support over these past months—what are we talking about, almost a million dollars, which is just so . . . I mean, just so over the top! No, but seriously, these are Spielberg numbers, you know? These are Burkle-sized dollars, and we’re just all so grateful.”

NORMAN HSU: “I have more.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Whoa! Hey hey! Slow down there, slugger! I mean, first, thanks! We’ll definitely follow up on that! But I guess the reason I’ve got you here on the blower is because, well, Senator Clinton and I got to chatting the other night, and she asked me, she said, ‘Hey, what’s that Norman Hsu up to? I like him,’ and she does, Norman, she likes you a lot. And you know, I couldn’t quite give her an answer. And darn it all, this stupid BlackBerry thingy got all messed up and it seems I don’t even have any, you know, business contact info for you, and now that I’ve got you on the phone I’d love to kind of update my records, if that’s okay.”

NORMAN HSU: “Okay.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “So what kind of business are you in, Norman?”

NORMAN HSU: “I’m not in any kind of business.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “I’m sorry, let me be clear. Where do you work?”

NORMAN HSU: “I don’t have a job.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Right, right. Who does? You know? Look, I hate to be tacky—but hey, it’s my job, huh?—but I have to come right out and ask: Where does the money come from?”

NORMAN HSU: “Come from?”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “It’s an awful lot of money, Norman! I mean, with Spielberg, we know—it comes from all that *E.T.* crap. And with Burkle, it comes from . . . well, we’re not really sure with Burkle. But it, you know, comes with a check with a printed name and letterhead and stuff, and that’s sort of all we need to know. But with you, Norman, I’ll be honest. We got some checks in crayon. We got about $45,000 in quarters . . .”

NORMAN HSU: “You didn’t like the quarters?”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “No, no, no! We LOVED the quarters! We’ve got one of those spin-type sorting machines and it’s been a blast for the interns to stack ’em all up. We’re very grateful, Norman, really. It’s just that, well, it’s unusual for us to get donations like that.”

NORMAN HSU: “What about the big check?”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Again, loved it, muchos gracias. Seriously. The big amount was perfect. But that’s the thing, it wasn’t just a big check, it was also a BIG check, you know? Like the size of a refrigerator door.”

NORMAN HSU: “I thought it was whimsical.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “It was, Norman. Really. Just a hoot. We all roared with laughter. As I said, the senator just thinks the world of you. Still. Hard to deposit.”

NORMAN HSU: “It cleared though, right?”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Oh, yeah. Yeah. I mean, we made it work, Norman. That’s what we do. That’s what I do here on the Clinton campaign: I make things work. It’s just that, eventually, they’re going to ask us questions about you. And the other donors.”

NORMAN HSU: “Me? What about me?”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Like, maybe, why are you donating so much to Hillary Clinton?”

NORMAN HSU: “Because I like her.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “No, seriously, why?”

NORMAN HSU: “I just like her.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “But people will want to know if you’re doing it to help your business. Or your investments.”

NORMAN HSU: “I don’t have those.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Then wherever your money comes from.”

NORMAN HSU: “Well, actually, I stole it.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “You know, Norman, I think you went through a bad cell there and I missed that part.”

NORMAN HSU: “But I’m on a land line.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Right. So am I. Still. The cells sometimes interfere with . . . stuff. You know? Anyway, great talking to you.”

NORMAN HSU: “There’s a warrant out for my arrest for fraud.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “There’s that pesky cell again. Norman, I’m going to have to call you back.”

NORMAN HSU: “But you didn’t tell me how much you need.”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Looking for 250K.”

NORMAN HSU: “Done. Big check okay? I thought it was fun.”

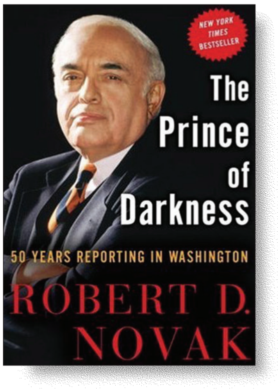
UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Can you do cash?”

NORMAN HSU: “Sure thing! Quarters? Singles?”

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: “Whatever’s convenient.”

NORMAN HSU: “Look for it!”

Scoops of A Half-Century



The Prince of Darkness: 50 Years Reporting in Washington, by Robert D. Novak (Crown, 672 pp., $29.95)

LOU CANNON

EDWIN O'CONNOR's classic political novel, *The Last Hurrah*, was published in 1956, a year before Robert Novak went to Washington. In a memorable passage, Frank Skeffington, a charming but unscrupulous Irish politician, has received the last rites of the Catholic Church. The mournful retinue at the dying man's bedside includes an old foe, who in a misplaced attempt at forgiveness proclaims that if Skeffington "had it all to do over again, there's not the slightest doubt but that he'd do it all very, very differently." Skeffington opens his eyes and says: "To hell I would!"

This fictional act of defiance came to mind as I read the final pages of Robert Novak's sprawling, candid, informative, nostalgic, and entertaining memoir. Novak is not exactly on his deathbed, but he is battling his fourth cancer after having also survived spinal meningitis, a blood clot, and various other maladies. Enemies abound. On the right, in the pages of this magazine, he has been accused of insufficient patriotism. On the left, as the residue of the Valerie Plame affair, he has been denounced as a traitor. The CNN network, on which he was a conservative star, has dumped him. But Novak, at the age of 76, displays an almost serene equanimity. Love your country, but never trust your government, he tells a college graduating class that includes his daughter. He is proud to have been, in the spirit of his hero, the medieval troubadour and troublemaker Bertrand de Born, a stirrer-up of strife. Novak is grateful for his family, his faith, our country, and "having so much fun at the only trade in which I could imagine succeeding." He is not going gentle into any night, good or otherwise.

There is much to like in this book, beginning with the title. I had assumed that Novak's nickname was a liberal gibe combining distaste for his conservatism with a swipe at his saturnine appearance. It turns out, however, that "prince of darkness" was the coinage of the mordant *Newsweek* reporter John J. Lindsay, whom some of us called "real John" to distinguish him from the vaporous former mayor of New York. Novak writes that Lindsay gave him the label in 1964 before he was a conservative "because of my unsmiling pessimism about the prospects for America and Western civilization." Such pessimism has its uses. It can, for instance, rescue a reporter from illusion. On page after page, Novak delivers pessimistic evaluations of political leaders, including various presidents of the United States. Lyndon Johnson is divisive, Richard Nixon is a "fraud," Gerald Ford is a nice man ill equipped to be president, Jimmy Carter is a "habitual liar," George H. W. Bush is clueless, Bill Clinton is a man of the Left posing as a man of the center, George W. Bush is secretive and doesn't admit mistakes.

Novak likes John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan (my favorites, too) but finds JFK longer on style than on substance. He worships Reagan without fully understanding him. Novak tells of a February 18, 1986, lunch at the White House where Reagan went on about the Filipino Scouts, who helped embattled U.S. forces against the Japanese in World War II. Novak interprets this as a coded signal from Reagan that he had decided to force Ferdinand Marcos out of the presidency of the Philippines. In fact—and I covered this ground carefully for the *Washington Post* and in my book on the Reagan presidency—Reagan (as he told Colin Powell) accepted at face value Marcos's concocted story that he had been an heroic member of the Filipino Scouts. It wasn't until February 23, five days after this lunch, that Reagan—under pressure from Adm. William Crowe, chairman of the Joint Chiefs; Secretary of State George Shultz; and his old friend, the underrated Sen. Paul Laxalt of Nevada—that Reagan reluctantly agreed to force Marcos out. Laxalt made the long-distance call to Marcos, telling him the time had come "to cut and cut cleanly." I share Novak's view that Reagan was a great president, but it does his memory no service to suggest that he had second sight.

This is a small point in the large canvass of this book, which provides a mini-history of political Washington during the half-century in which Novak has worked there, first as a reporter for the Associated Press and the *Wall Street Journal*, then for a remarkable 30 years as a daily columnist paired with Rowland Evans and as a television performer, and finally on his own for another decade with a column and a reduced television role. In its heyday Evans and Novak relied less on slant than on shoe leather and was a must-read because it was jammed with inside information. Al Hunt, no slouch in the work department, told me years ago that no reporter worked harder than Novak, and the result of that industry was often an exclusive story.

Moreover, Novak's eleven-hour working days were fueled by so much alcohol that this reporter, who has consumed his share, wonders how Novak ever made his deadlines or kept his stories straight.

Mr. Cannon, a biographer of Ronald Reagan, worked 26 years at the *Washington Post* and is co-author, with Carl M. Cannon, of the forthcoming *Reagan's Disciple: George W. Bush's Quest for a Presidential Legacy.*

Novak's routine, he tells us, was to have two Scotches while having lunch with a source and often a bottle of beer during the meal, write a column, and then head to a bar near work by himself where he would consume two more Scotches before driving home and having a cocktail hour with his wife and wine with dinner. "I drank too much, I drove too fast, and often I combined them by driving under the influence," writes Novak, who also confesses to occasional brawls and too much gambling. It took a series of health setbacks to persuade Novak that he had a "major drinking problem." Fortunately, an asthma attack induced him to give up his four-pack-a-day smoking habit in 1963. "That's why I'm writing my memoirs as a septuagenarian," he observes.

Novak's candor about his lifestyle is matched by candor about nearly everything else. He gives details of his multifaceted income, translating the figures into 2006 dollars. He recounts the "juvenile act" of voting twice for Dwight Eisenhower (Novak was registered in two states), of putting the first three-piece suit he ever owned on the *Wall Street Journal* expense account, and of neglecting his daughter and son, who seem fortunate to have been raised by his esteemed wife Geraldine. Novak recounts mistakes in judgment—underestimating Martin Luther King Jr., for example—and tells of "scoops" that turned out wrong and of other scoops that never saw the light of day because he and Evans didn't fully trust their source. He also tells of being manipulated. In 1972, Nixon decided to move the Republican National Convention from San Diego to Miami Beach because of concern about anti-war demonstrations. The Nixon team invented a false cover story to explain the move and planted it with Novak, who put it in his column. "I had been used," Novak explains, adding, "We were so ravenous for exclusive news that we were susceptible to manipulation by leaks, compromising our credibility."

Novak's credibility remains intact in these memoirs, however, because he turns his gimlet eye as readily on himself as on those he covers. He gives lively accounts of the ups and downs of *Crossfire* and other television programs on which he participated, praising such journalistic accomplices as Hunt, Mark Shields, and Jack Germond and settling scores with John McLaughlin and Mona Charen, among others. Except for the irrepressible *Capital Gang*, where the chemistry among Shields, Hunt, and Novak sparkled, I rarely watched these shows except when assigned to do so and had not realized the importance of *Crossfire* in Novak's political transformation. "My deepening conservatism was based mainly on anticommunist foreign policy and supply-side economics," Novak writes. "But now, because of *Crossfire*, I found myself engaged on issues I seldom wrote about: capital punishment, gay rights, abortion, and gun control. . . . The process had the effect of hardening my positions. I was ever more becoming a right-wing ideologue."

Novak also became an outspoken challenger of the liberal orthodoxy of the Washington media establishment. This role came with the baggage of cognitive dissonance because Novak was part of the establishment. In 1998, he was president of Washington's exclusive group of journalists, the Gridiron Club, which entitled him to sit next to the president of the United States during the organization's spring dinner, a theatrical event that spoofs politicians. Novak was determined to get Bill Clinton to the dinner even though "the smart money was that in the middle of the [Monica] Lewinsky scandal, Clinton would not show up to be satirized by smart aleck journalists, sitting at Novak's side no less." To encourage the president's attendance, Novak "killed anything in the show that would humiliate Clinton, including a wickedly clever parody of 'Thank Heaven for Little Girls.'" Clinton came but spent most of the evening talking to the man on his right, the since-tarnished Conrad Black, about his biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Beyond a mutual fascination with FDR, writes Novak, "I think Clinton and Black liked each other because they both were intelligent, reckless, charismatic risk-takers. I simply was not in their class."

Novak's credibility remains intact in these memoirs because he turns his gimlet eye as readily on himself as on those he covers.

On the Big Questions, Novak does well by my lights. He was dazzled by *Witness*, as who wasn't, but remained an unbeliever in the face of what Whittaker Chambers called "the most revolutionary question in history: God or man?" Novak gives an account of his conversion, decades later, to Catholicism that this Catholic convert found compelling. His new faith made him more accepting in some ways, but he is still seething about

LOVER

To you, my love, in the distant future, who would
have been my perfect love: Think of our trips
together: the canyons out west (where as you stood
in wonder, I'd kiss the desert from your lips).
Think of how we'd sail to Rio, or fly
to St. Moritz, then Prague, or anyplace
you'd like. Even ancient Egypt (where I
would kiss the sweat beads from your lovely face).
Think of our love: that steady, tender, always
kind, yet also the kind that would explode
with the secret touch of you, as within the daze
of your eyes, planets would whirl and stars implode.
Yes, we'd do all of this, and much more too,
and I wouldn't have to write this poem to you.

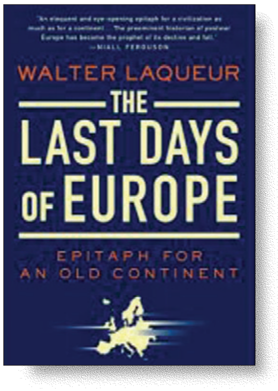
—WILLIAM BAER

a April 7, 2003, story by David Frum in National Review headlined “Unpatriotic Conservatives: A War against America.” Novak objects to being called a paleoconservative given his liberal views on trade and immigration, objects to being lumped with anti-Semites because he is critical of Israel, and especially objects to the questioning of his patriotism. I’ll leave the paleo stuff and Israel to others but stand foursquare with Novak against the slur on his patriotism. During a long career in which many of his views changed, the Novak constants have been anti-Communism and love of country. By any recognizable standard, he’s a patriot.

Finally, Novak gives a reasonable defense of his role in the Valerie Wilson (née Plame) affair. I’m from a school of old-fashioned journalism that would not identify CIA agents in print under almost any circumstances. That said, it’s unlikely that Mrs. Wilson was a covert agent in the meaning of the Intelligence Identities Protection Act. In writing about Mrs. Wilson’s role in sending her husband to Niger “to investigate possible Iraqi purchases of uranium,” Novak was motivated, as usual, by his hitherto-cited “ravenous” appetite for exclusive news, not a Karl Rove–inspired plot to smear Joseph Wilson. Novak’s inadvertent source for this information was deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage—whom Novak made a commendable effort to protect. But he was in a box once the FBI told Novak it knew his source and gave him a waiver from Armitage allowing Novak to identify him.

I still wonder, as does Novak, why the Justice Department or Armitage didn’t come forward before a special prosecutor was named and reveal the truth. This would have averted the train wreck that included the trial of I. Lewis Libby and the jailing of reporter Judith Miller. It also would have spared Novak from the torrent of invective that follows him to this day, not to mention $160,000 in legal fees. I surmise from Novak’s account that he wishes he had never named Mrs. Wilson in his column, but he cannot quite bring himself to say this. One can almost see Frank Skeffington opening his eyes for a final proclamation that he did things his way. **NR**

Gathering Storm



The Last Days of Europe: Epitaph for an Old Continent, by Walter Laqueur (Thomas Dunne, 256 pp., $25.95)

DAVID PRYCE-JONES

“The Last Days of Europe” is a title with a drum-beat to it. Can the implicit doom really be true? A mere hundred years ago, the Continent commanded most of Asia and Africa, and was the universal model of law, learning, and invention. The fathering of Communism and Nazism shattered this preeminence, of course; its ally and rival, the United States, took over the lead. But isn’t the European Union that has been taking shape these last 50 years a complete recovery, an exciting new start? Proclaimed in triumphalist treaties and speeches, the intention in the EU capital of Brussels is to make the United States of Europe into the world power of the coming century. A whole range of politicians and the academics at their heels behave and write as if this intention corresponded to reality.

Walter Laqueur is not among them. Born in Breslau, a city disputed between Germans and Poles, he has lived through the period of Nazism and Communism, and is one of the last representatives of European intellectual life as it once was, but is no longer. Judicious skepticism has long been his hallmark as a historian of contemporary issues. Analyzing Europe today, he finds a cluster of interlinked factors that lead him to conclude that, at best, there will be slow, gradual decline; at worst, a rapid collapse.

Laqueur takes as his starting point the lapidary judgment of Auguste Comte that demography is fate. To maintain population, Europe needs a total fertility rate of 2.1 or above, but at present it is a miserable 1.37, and declining. People can afford to have children more easily than in the past, but are choosing not to do so, presumably out of selfishness or lack of confidence in the future. In Italy and Spain, for instance, about half as many children are now being born as around 1960. Yemen is projected by the middle of the century to have a larger population than Russia. If trends continue, by the end of this century the population of Europe will be only a fraction of what it is today.

The effects even now are alarming. In major European countries, for the first time in history, there are more people over 60 years old than under twenty. The median ages of the populations of Europe and the United States are now more or less the same, but by 2050 the median age is projected to be 36 in the U.S.—and 53 in Europe. The welfare state is considered a European glory, and a politician who advocates even small diminutions of it has no chance of being elected. By 2050, if not before, who will be paying for the social benefits, in particular the pensions?

Initially, at least, immigration from the Third World, and Muslim countries in particular, seems to have been welcomed as a means of recruiting the missing workforce. Statistics in this field are invariably more indicative than final, but the given figures are astonishing enough, and may well be understated on account of illegal immigration. In Germany, for instance, the 6,800 Muslim inhabitants of 1961 have risen to 3.6 million today; in Denmark, the 25,000 of 1982 are 300,000; in France and Holland, the totals have doubled since 1980. All told, there are probably somewhere near 20 million Muslim immigrants in western and central Europe, and perhaps almost as many again in Russia.

“Naïveté” is one judgmental noun that crops up several times in this book, and “fantasy” is another. It was naïve and fanciful on the part of European governments to allow virtually unrestricted immigration of millions with a religion and culture that

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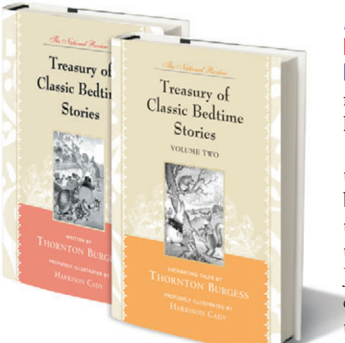

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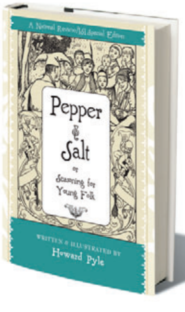

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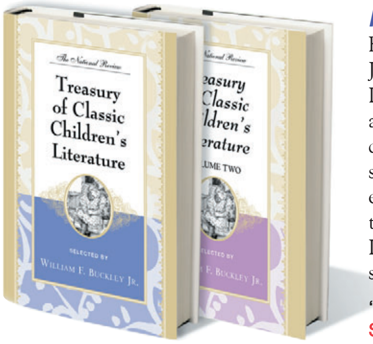

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ORDER ONLINE AT HTTP://STORE.NATIONALREVIEW.COM; FOR GIFT OR RUSH ORDERS CALL 212-679-7330/EXT. 2840 (M-F/9AM-4PM/EST) set them apart from the indigenous population. Cities like Antwerp, Bradford, Lille, Marseilles, and Rotterdam may soon be thoroughly Islamized with Muslim majorities. In contrast, the emigration of native Europeans has never been higher. Realizing too late the confusion they were introducing into their societies, governments had no idea how best to proceed. The British instituted multiculturalism, whereby Muslims are encouraged to pursue their religion and culture free from pressure to integrate; the French try to impose the republican equality enjoyed by everyone else; the Germans favor special expenditure to buy off discontent. Sheer bribery might conceivably serve the purpose, but it is unaffordable while levels of unemployment and debt remain high, and the requisite economic growth is uncertain. Each and every approach so far has been a failure.

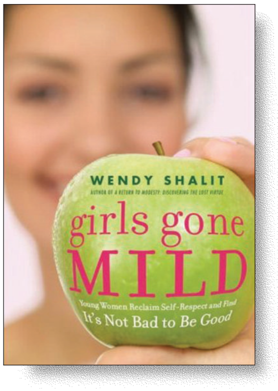
Hopes are entertained that such European-based Muslim thinkers as Tariq Ramadan will pave the way to reforming Islam, but Laqueur shows that this too is naïve: Ramadan wants a privileged space for Muslims in Europe. Meanwhile Islamist mosques, cells, and terror attacks in one European city after another intimidate potential moderates, while also provoking racist or semi-fascist reactions among native Europeans. Binational states might emerge, with every prospect of communal and ethnic and religious violence. To stave off such a catastrophe, Laqueur recommends appeasement, and lots of it, in spite of an evident reluctance to give preference to social peace over justice. We must be nice to Muslims while we are the majority, a Swedish politician has already proposed, so that they are nice to us when they are the majority. The Dutch Catholic bishop of Breda, no less, has just suggested that Christians replace the word "God" with "Allah." By means of such steps, one at a time, here and there, the Continent is indeed closing with its past.

The political philosophy of Brussels, in the last of Laqueur's danger signals, is a giant exercise in naïveté and fantasy, for it professes that Europe has abandoned its former competitive nationalisms, and thereby sets a moral example that the rest of the world is bound to follow in admiration. "Soft power" of this sort will supposedly restore to Europe its imperial role: The Continent would then have the added pleasure of thumbing its nose at the U.S. Doubt about these happy projections of the future began to surface when the Europeans realized that they could not put an army in the field to prevent ethnic cleansing and genocidal massacres in Bosnia and Kosovo, but had to rely on the United States. Russia, Laqueur also points out, is in a position to turn off supplies of oil and natural gas, to which Europe could respond only by complaining. China, Iran, North Korea, and even nuclear-armed India are among countries immune to the Gandhi-like moral example on which the Europeans set such store.

No very clear reasons can explain the absence of reality in Brussels. It may be that the world wars and experience of Fascism and Communism traumatized EU leaders and their bureaucrats and apologists, and froze their powers of judgment; it may be that they have a death wish, or perhaps they are seduced by the privileges they grant themselves. At any rate, they press on regardless. Elections, referendums, and opinion polls show that Europeans want less and less federation, not more. The French and the Dutch even voted against the European constitution, but this had no effect at all: The constitution is now about to be ratified without any possibility of taking the popular will into account. Forcing their intentions upon reluctant populations in this manner, Eurocrats evidently believe that they can govern without the consent of the governed. There are precedents for what happens in such a case. Previous monarchs who ruled on absolute principles all died at the hands of the mob.

Laqueur's envoi to the old world that gave the West its values is unanswerable, full of grief, as well as unspoken fear of violence to come. The Europeans once again have made a mess of things, and nobody has any idea how they are to save themselves. The Continent is altering out of all recognition; for the future, its contribution to civilization will lie in the historical record. The most that Laqueur can hope for is a Continent that has turned into a museum, with tourist guides and gondoliers to cater to visitors inquiring into the culture of its once-dominant past. He imagines that the role of Europeans will be to hold forth about Shakespeare and Beethoven. In the light of his analysis, may we be so lucky. **NR**

Mild, Mild Life


WENDY SHALIT
AUTHOR OF A RETURN TO MODESTY: DISCOVERING THE LOST VIRTUE
girls gone
MILD
Young Women Reclaim Self-Respect and Find
It's Not Bad to Be Good

Girls Gone Mild: Young Women Reclaim Self-Respect and Find It's Not Bad to Be Good, by Wendy Shalit (Random House, 352 pp., $25.95)

KATHRYN JEAN LOPEZ

BABY, baby, it's a wild world—from your earliest days. Recalling a 2002 controversy over Abercrombie and Fitch's marketing of thongs to ten-year-old girls, Wendy Shalit now observes: "Parents no longer debate the merits of thongs for tweens but instead whether I'M TOO SEXY FOR MY DIAPER is a 'healthy' message for an infant girl's onesie."

The mother of a toddler, Shalit begins her new book with an account of a trip to her local toy store—which had disturbing echoes of a red-light district. Never mind that Marvin Gaye was singing "When I get that feeling, I want sexual healing" on the store's speakers. "In the doll section," Shalit recalls, "only dolls in tight-fitting, provocative outfits stared out at me, all wearing heavy makeup and self-satisfied, flirty expressions. The young sprite browsing next to me, who looked about seven years old, wore a purple cropped top and peep-toe wedges with heels two inches high—an outfit that seemed to mock the very idea of finding a suitable doll for a little girl."

The "Bratz Babyz" dolls Shalit was looking at included a "Babyz Nite Out" doll wearing "fishnet stockings, a hot-pink micromini, and a black leather belt." The box tells you the Babyz are for the "four-plus" set, but kids of two and three can be seen with them at your local playground. Shalit visited the manufacturer's website, and observed: "Many of the 'Babyz' . . . are posed very seductively, showing off their slick lips and teeny-weeny underpants. The Baby Bratz doll 'Phoebe' is garbed in a fluffy pink fur with matching lingerie, and her twin, 'Roxxi,' is stuffed into red-hot lingerie and a black leather jacket." Companion Bratz books that are advertised to girls three and up ask girls what they wear when they "want to look hot for an extra special occasion." Shalit is right to call this "creepy."

So much for the bad news, the "Wild"; now let's look at the "Mild."

Shalit says that in a culture where "being publicly sexual has become the only acceptable way for girls to demonstrate maturity," it's heartening that it's not so much the older folks—like Tipper Gore and other politically connected angry moms—who are fighting back, as it is the young girls themselves. The smut is still out there, and it's often in your face—even when you're with your kids. But it's not going unchallenged.

> Girls, writes Shalit, are bringing modesty back—and not in some absurdly unrealistic way.

Girls, writes Shalit, are bringing modesty back—and not in some absurdly unrealistic way that can be caricatured as "repression." These girls know—because they've seen it in their families, on their campuses, in their neighborhoods, or through direct, unfortunate personal experience—that acting "wild," being promiscuous, is the truly repressive and dehumanizing option. Says Shalit: "Looking 'wild' and acting 'wild' are supposed to be empowering, but more often they lead to misery, especially for young women who quickly learn to put their emotions in a deep freeze in order to do what is expected."

Her book is full of impressive young women, and none more so than Rashida Jolley. This 26-year-old Washington, D.C., native challenges urban kids to have a little R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Jolley points out that "people like to stereotype African Americans as animalistic or whatever," and registers a strong dissent. It's "very offensive and very racist," she says, to imply "that we don't have control over ourselves." And she blasts the patronizing ideology of such organizations as Planned Parenthood: "Those same individuals want to target urban schools and set up clinics and they make an assumption that we are just going to have sex anyway, and we aren't capable of anything else, and to me that is extremely demeaning."

Her lesson—and Shalit's—is clear:

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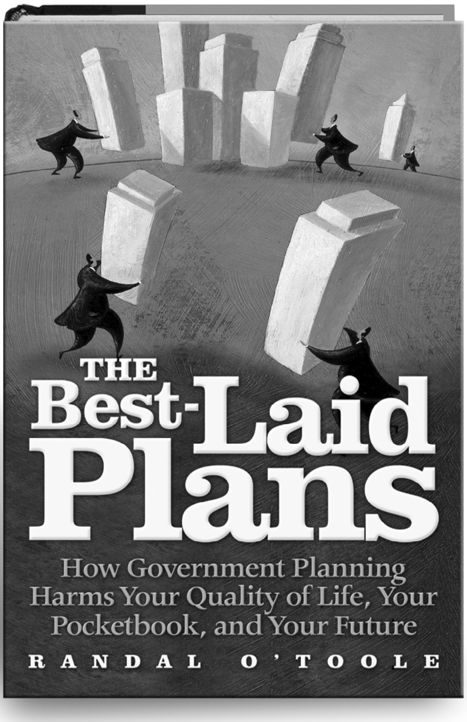
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Expect more and you might get more—a milder child, and a milder young adult. If you hand them Bratz in bras and celebrate celebrities best known for their Internet sex videos, you’ll get something different.

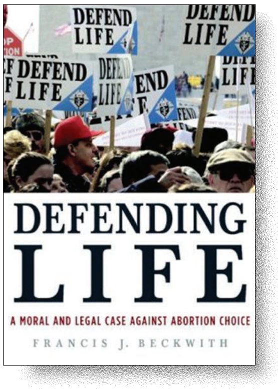
“Intimacy flourishes where there is also restraint,” Shalit writes. “Yet all the voices around young people tend to promote a cavalier attitude toward sex from the get-go, often under the guise of ‘health.’”

But today, more and more sensible young women are bridling when they hear “bitches” and “hos” on the radio. And it’s not a political issue in the least. A 25-year-old former model tells Shalit that it won’t be the conservative media that will help the culture go mild. The revolution, the model says, will continue to happen from within: It will start in a girl’s childhood home, “with a mother who values herself, and a father who respects her.” It will continue in college and in the workplace.

Shalit’s book is anecdotal—based on over 100 interviews with young women, ages 12 to 28—and it’s not a policy prescription. It’s advice and inspiration for girls who want to be good and to know they’re not alone. But—perhaps more important—it’s a knock in the head to jaded adults who think that “kids are just going to have sex anyway.” Well, if you tell kids that, again and again, it will end up being true. But if you stay away from such easy, self-fulfilling prophecies—if, instead, you insist on self-respect; if you honor and support marriage and motherhood and fatherhood; if, in short, you expect the best—we won’t be saddled with a nation of Britneys lost in their sequined bras.

Talk or write about modesty or abstinence and you’re almost immediately dismissed as a prudish virgin who should have had to live under the Taliban (I’ve gotten the e-mails). Adults in authority—school administrators, commentators, and government officials—often seem to want teens to get only one side of the sexuality story. But girls need—and want—an alternative. In letting more and more young Americans know the alternative is out there and catching on, Wendy Shalit’s book (along with its accompanying website, modestyzone.net) is no modest cultural contribution. **NR**

For Humanity



Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case Against Abortion Choice, by Francis J. Beckwith (Cambridge, 312 pp., $22.99)

RYAN T. ANDERSON

‘Supreme Court Settles Abortion Issue”: So declared the *New York Times* the day after the Court’s *Roe* v. *Wade* decision. But as the past 34 years have shown, there is no question less settled in American public life than abortion. The pro-life movement has succeeded in keeping the debate alive—and in his new book, *Defending Life*, leading pro-life scholar Francis J. Beckwith offers a precise statement of the philosophical and jurisprudential case the movement has developed.

Beckwith begins by defusing the “don’t impose your morality” slogan. Everyone, he argues, recognizes the absurdity of being “personally opposed” to murder but refusing to “impose” that view on others. State neutrality is impossible; either the law recognizes the unborn as persons and protects them, or it does not and permits the killing of them. That the fetus is a person with rights is no more religious a claim than the assertion that the fetus is not. Our task is to determine which claim is true.

Mr. Anderson is an assistant editor at *First Things*. A 2007 Phillips Foundation Fellow, he is the assistant director of the Program in Bioethics at the Witherspoon Institute of Princeton, N.J.

But Americans' ability to decide this question was usurped by the Supreme Court's *Roe* decision, which—together with its companion case *Doe* v. *Bolton*—provided a constitutional right to abortion for practically any reason throughout the entire nine months of pregnancy. *Roe* allowed states to protect the fetus in the third trimester, but mandated exceptions for the life *and health* of the mother; *Bolton* defined health broadly to include "all factors—physical, emotional, psychological," and so on. Justice Harry Blackmun said that the Court "need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins." But it did: Life doesn't begin in a way that merits protection until after birth.

The Court based its abortion decision on a "right of privacy" manufactured in *Griswold* v. *Connecticut* (1965), coupled with a fraudulent reading of history according to which abortion prohibitions were intended to protect women, not babies. (Beckwith correctly observes that the "overwhelming consensus of scholarship" considers this historical argument "untrustworthy and essentially worthless.") In *Stenberg* v. *Carhart* (2000), the Court struck down Nebraska's partial-birth-abortion ban by extending the health criterion to include a right to "the safest procedure" of abortion. But here the Court proved too much: If less intrusive procedures are safer, wouldn't abortion by infanticide be best for the mother's health? Furthermore, asks Beckwith, what is it about the "vaginal passageway that changes the child's nature in such a significant fashion that it may be killed without justification before exit but only with justification post-exit?"

The Constitution is silent on these questions. How should citizens approach them? Beckwith thinks we need to answer three questions: Is the fetus a human being? Is it a person—a moral agent? And does it have any claim to inhabit a woman's womb? Beckwith answers yes to all three questions.

He begins by marshaling medical embryology to show that "from a strictly scientific point of view . . . an individual human life begins at conception." Whereas sperm and egg each contain half of the genetic code (23 chromosomes) and are parts of larger organisms (the parents), the one-celled zygote "is a new, although tiny, individual with a human genetic code with its own genomic sequence (with 46 chromosomes), which is neither her mother's nor her father's. From this point until death *no new genetic information is needed* to make the unborn entity an individual human being." Beckwith responds to common objections, noting that high rates of natural embryo loss no more disprove the humanity of embryos than high rates of infant mortality do that of infants; that early-embryo twinning does no more to undermine the unity of the embryo prior to twinning than cutting a flatworm in half (forming two flatworms) does to its unity prior to separation; and that while a human embryo doesn't look like an adult, it "does look exactly like a human ought to look at this stage of her development."

If embryos and fetuses are human beings (which the science compels reasonable people to acknowledge), do they have a right to life? Some, like David Boonin of the University of Colorado, think not. Describing a sonogram taken 24 weeks before his son's birth, Boonin writes: "There is no doubt in my mind that this picture, too, shows the same little boy at a very early stage in his physical development. And there is no question that the position I defend . . . entails that it would have been morally permissible to end his life at this point." Advocates of this view typically point to self-awareness or other immediately exercisable mental capacities as features that make a human being valuable.

Beckwith rejects these arguments because they rest on a faulty understanding of the human person, undermine human equality, and produce morally repugnant conclusions. For starters, when adults are asleep, unconscious, or temporarily comatose, they lack the immediate capacity to perform *any* rational acts. So do newborn babies until several months *after* birth. Do they therefore lack the right to life? Also, if human value depends upon certain capacities that human beings possess in varying degrees, there is no reason that fundamental rights shouldn't also vary, thus destroying equality. As Beckwith notes, "some adult human beings are more or less rational and more or less self-aware" than others. Should those at the high end be treated better than those at the low end?

Beckwith persuasively argues that the "substance view" explains why they should not: "A human being is intrinsically valuable because of the sort of thing it is and the human being remains that sort of thing as long as it exists." What about fetal development, sleep, coma, or dementia? "The human being is a particular type of substance—a rational moral agent—that remains identical to itself as long as it exists, even if it is not . . . currently able to immediately exercise these activities." We are valuable in virtue of the sort of thing (the substance) we are—human beings, with basic *root* capacities for personal acts. Since a substance cannot come in degrees, we are all equally human beings and thus equally valuable.

But even if fetuses are persons, does that mean they have a right to occupy women's wombs? Judith Jarvis Thomson famously answered no, when she compared pregnancy with being involuntarily hooked up to a diseased violinist in need of your kidneys: Does the violinist have a right to remain connected to you even if it leaves you bedridden for nine months? Thomson concluded that a right to life does not entail a right to use another person's body to sustain life: You could ethi-

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cally unplug the violinist just as a woman may legitimately remove a fetus from her womb. Beckwith responds that such arguments smuggle in a radically individualistic conception of autonomy. In reality, he writes, "human beings are persons-in-community and have certain natural obligations as members of their community that arise from their roles as mother, father, citizen, child, and so on."

Thomson also fails to recognize that pregnant women are (usually) responsible for being pregnant. She argues that women can consent to sex without consenting to pregnancy, but this simply ignores the nature of a sexual act: Even if diligent contraception use fails, points out bioethicist Patrick Lee, "the baby does not cause his or her presence in the mother's womb; rather, the mother and the father do." On what grounds can parents—who willingly engage in an act that naturally results in creating a highly dependent child whose natural home is a womb—claim to have no responsibility for that child? (The case of rape is more difficult since the woman is obviously *not* responsible for the child's existence. Beckwith notes that in such cases the child, too, is a wholly innocent victim of the rape, and asks if the death of the child-conceived-by-rape is proportionate to the suffering her mother would experience in carrying her to term.)

Beckwith closes by applying many of the principles relevant to abortion to new biotechnologies. But this is the least satisfying part of the book, as it fails to mention alternative sources of pluripotent (embryonic-type) stem cells and uncritically accepts the claim (rejected by leading authorities) that stem cells show great potential for treating Alzheimer's. Nor does it explain the great biological hurdles embryonic stem cells need to clear before they'll ever be useful in medicine. The rest of the book isn't flawless either: not quite rigorous enough for academics, yet too detailed for casual readers.

But these drawbacks are relatively minor, in the context of the book's overall success in argumentation. The *New York Times*'s claims notwithstanding, the Supreme Court has not settled the abortion issue; and when the abortion question eventually returns to the electorate, careful thinking will be crucial. That's when Beckwith's *Defending Life* will be helpful indeed. **NR**

■ **FILM** ■

Low Life

ROSS DOUTHAT

THE worst thing about this movie is the title. *Eastern Promises*—it sounds like a cruise ship, or a pricey spa, or a bodice-ripper set in Meiji Japan. Instead, David Cronenberg's new film takes place in the underworld of a rainswept London, where the waterways carry bobbing corpses, the steam baths double as slaughterhouses, and the only ripped bodices belong to strung-out Russian prostitutes with the hopeless eyes of the damned. "The city of whores and queers," says Semyon (Armin Mueller-Stahl), an avuncular restaurateur who may or may not be part of *vory v zakone*—the fearsome top dogs of the Russian Mafia.

Vincent Cassel and Viggo Mortensen in Eastern Promises

The soft-focus title notwithstanding, Cronenberg's movie starts with a jolt: A Chechen mobster has his throat sawn open in a barbershop, and a young pregnant woman bleeds to death in a London hospital, leaving behind a diary (in Russian) and an unclaimed child. A midwife named Anna (Naomi Watts) snatches the diary and covets the baby. She tells her family—an English mother, a bilious Russian uncle—that she just wants to track down the child's relatives, but she has wounds of her own (a recent miscarriage, a broken heart), and the recklessness of a woman who doesn't know exactly what she's looking for.

What she finds is an immigrant demimonde, where Old World charm coexists with modern gangsterism: The heroin and whores in the basement pay for the *Nutcracker*-style Christmas parties going on upstairs. *Eastern Promises* shares a screenwriter with 2003's *Dirty Pretty Things*, which likewise dealt with crime and punishment in immigrant London, and both movies envision Britain's capital as a lawless crossroads for the rootless and the ruthless of a globalizing world. But where *Dirty Pretty Things* was primarily concerned with the immigrant as victim—serving up the adorable Audrey Tautou as an asylum-seeker caught up in an organ-trafficking scheme—Cronenberg's film emphasizes the immigrant as predator, sending its heroine out as a sheep among the Russian wolves.

Not that Anna is entirely innocent of what she's getting herself into. She belongs to the world of the bourgeoisie—of the "*ordinary* people," as her anxious mother puts it—but her uncle is a former KGB man, with enough knowledge of the world on the other side of the looking-glass to warn her against stepping through. Yet his desire to protect her ends up backfiring: By refusing to translate the dead girl's diary ("Do you always rob the bodies of the dead?" he asks Anna), he forces her to look for help in all the wrong places—and particularly in the red-draped shadows of the Trans-Siberian Restaurant, where Mueller-Stahl's Semyon serves the borscht and Viggo Mortensen does the driving.

This is Mortensen's movie. His character, Nikolai, is the aide-de-camp to Semyon's drunken, possibly homosexual

FOCUS FEATURES

son Kirill (Vincent Cassel), alternating between managing Kirill's temper, deflecting his ambiguous advances, and cleaning up his messes (which include the body of that Chechen mafioso). Nikolai's flesh is alive with tattoos, and his hair is swept back to emphasize the fox-like jut of his face. He could be a saint in an icon, with his haunted eyes and ascetic figure, or the lean and hungry devil whispering in the holy man's ear. Coiled and still, he seduces by giving nothing of himself away, and drawing everyone else into orbit around him—Anna, Kirill, Semyon, the audience.

The rest of Cronenberg's cast gives fine performances as well, but we've seen their types before—the kind-seeming, sinister crime boss; the wastrel son; the headstrong damsel who gets in over her head. At times, the script seems to have something similarly predictable in mind for Mortensen, particularly in a clumsy third-act revelation designed to strip at least some of the shades of gray from his character. But nothing we learn about Nikolai seems commensurate with the air of mystery and moral ambiguity that Mortensen projects, whether he's disposing of a corpse with practiced ease ("Okay," he says, "now I'm going to do his teeth and cut off his fingers"), rutting with a strung-out whore while Kirill watches eagerly, or—in the film's most astonishing scene—fighting barehanded and stark naked against two knife-wielding Chechen assassins who ambush him in a steambath. "I need to know who you are," Anna insists, speaking for the audience as well, and it's a testament to Mortensen's riveting performance that no possible answer to her question seems sufficient to the remarkable character he's summoned up.

This is a strange film, all told: at once cynical and sentimental, mannered and visceral. An air of moral decay hangs over the proceedings, and Cronenberg indulges his taste for gore, lingering unnecessarily over throat-slittings and gouged-in eyeballs. Yet the plot has the schematics of a fairy tale—there are echoes of Dickens, and nods to the Christmas story—in which the wicked are punished and the innocent saved. What it all adds up to I'm not quite sure, but I left the theater with the same feeling that Mortensen's Nikolai inspires in Anna—an unsettled fascination, and a reluctant craving for more. **NR**

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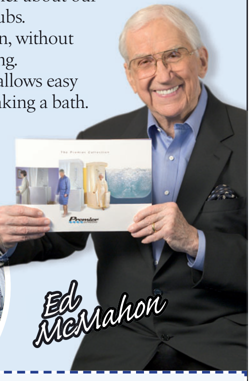

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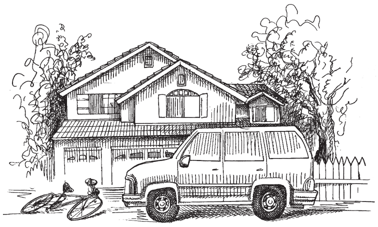
■ THE STRAGGLER ■

The Virtual Attic



JOHN DERBYSHIRE

My attic, like yours, is a place of dust and dark corners, exposed brickwork and beams, and piled boxes and bundles of forgotten or little-used items: luggage, old magazines, out-of-favor toys, medical mementoes from long-ago mishaps (did I really go round on crutches for three months?), and what department stores call "seasonals"—Christmas decorations and the like. Much of it will be stock for our next garage sale, but there are also a few boxes that are neither "seasonal" nor garage-saleable, and which nag feebly at the conscience when spotted. Now I think I have come up with . . . but let me begin at the beginning.

It is my occasional pleasure—I am speaking of three or four hours a week—to fiddle with my computer. I don't mean mechanically. I don't know one end of a soldering iron from the other. This is software fiddling—getting the computer to do things for me. I made my living for some years as a computer programmer, back in the days of "big iron"—the million-dollar mainframe computers that took up entire floors of corporate premises before desktops, laptops, handhelds, and the Internet arrived like that meteor that saw off the dinosaurs. I still like to do a little coding now and then, though for amusement only, and perhaps to reassure myself that the computer is still my servant, not my master.

Software fiddling nowadays means making things for the Internet. Using mark-up languages, you create web pages for your computer to display. Using a "front-end" language, you instruct the displaying computer to manipulate the displayed information. Using a different, "server-side" language, you instruct the distant server, where all pages are permanently kept, to save, search, and retrieve information. It's *fun*.

Well, I have my own website, which I started back in the late 1990s, when the Internet was still new, at any rate to the general public. Still trapped in that "big iron," IBM-or-nothing mentality, I bought my site-building tools from the biggest, bossiest firm around, which was of course Microsoft Corp. They had a product named FrontPage, which you could use to build a website. I bought the thing, read the first three chapters of the manual, muttered "Right, I've got it," and put up my website.

Alas! for the command economy and the huge world-bestriding commercial behemoths of yesteryear. Woe! to the poor citizen who has placed his trust in their permanence and infallibility. FrontPage, it turned out, was the Edsel of software packages. The web pages it generated were nightmares of redundancy and incompatibility. I stuck with it grimly, but in 2006 Microsoft stopped issuing new releases of the beast and folded it into a new package that (a) cost three times as much while (b) inheriting all FrontPage's worst features.

Wiser now, I resolved to rebuild my website from scratch, using the most elementary, basic tools I could find, preferably ones that did not bear the Microsoft logo. I taught myself the mark-up languages and set to it. It was in the course of planning out this larger rebuilding project that I lit upon one of the few original ideas I have ever had: the Virtual Attic. It came to me as follows.

In my attic I have some ancient cardboard boxes containing such items of family memorabilia as have survived my travels. My maternal grandmother's baptismal certificate (1875) is in there. So are her husband's discharge papers from the Royal Engineers (1915, discharged in consequence of "not being likely to become an efficient soldier"). So is my father's certificate of membership in the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes (1934). So are my own old school reports, which I have written about here (March 19, 2007, issue). So are numerous letters from my parents to me in various parts of the world. So, of course, are dozens of old photographs, going back into the 19th century.

I have made occasional desultory efforts to put interesting portions of this stuff on my current website. Building my new site, it occurred to me that by adding a little at a time I could get *all* these memorabilia on the Internet in a year or so, thus creating a "virtual attic"; and that, given what we can surmise about the future development of cyberspace, the prospects of its all surviving out there are likely better than they are in my actual attic.

One of the irreducible consequences of mammalian reproduction is that my children will be only half as interested in my family's history as I am, and *their* children only a quarter, and so depressingly on. Our domestic affections are, I believe, at a normal level for families in the early 21st century U.S.A., but if I were to be hit by the proverbial truck tomorrow, I see no strong incentive for my children to carry these moldering old letters and certificates forward into their post-Dad lives. Temperamentally, I am even slightly opposed to their doing so. Elaborate genealogies and interest in lineage and inheritance are Old World preoccupations. We Americans (the special case of the Latter-day Saints aside) are a forward-looking people, not much bothered by living in the same state of genealogical ignorance as Dr. Johnson, who boasted: "I can hardly tell who was my grandfather." Yet at the same time, I should be sorry to think of this material all being lost, if a little effort could preserve it forever. Hence: the virtual attic!

I was so taken with my idea that I even spoke about it to some friends in software development, asking them if there might be a business model to be worked out there somewhere. If *I* want to do this for *my* family memorabilia, there must be a lot of people who would pay to have it done for them. My friends thought money might possibly be made, but that the process of scanning and transcribing would be too labor-intensive to find a mass market.

I have therefore dropped the idea of the virtual attic as a business plan. Should any keen entrepreneur with a scanner and a high tolerance for dust and clutter wish to take it up, I offer the idea gratis, with my blessing (though I note that the domain www.virtualattic.com is already taken by an outfit selling antique glassware). I scan, and code, and transcribe, for myself alone, and for my ancestors. **NR**

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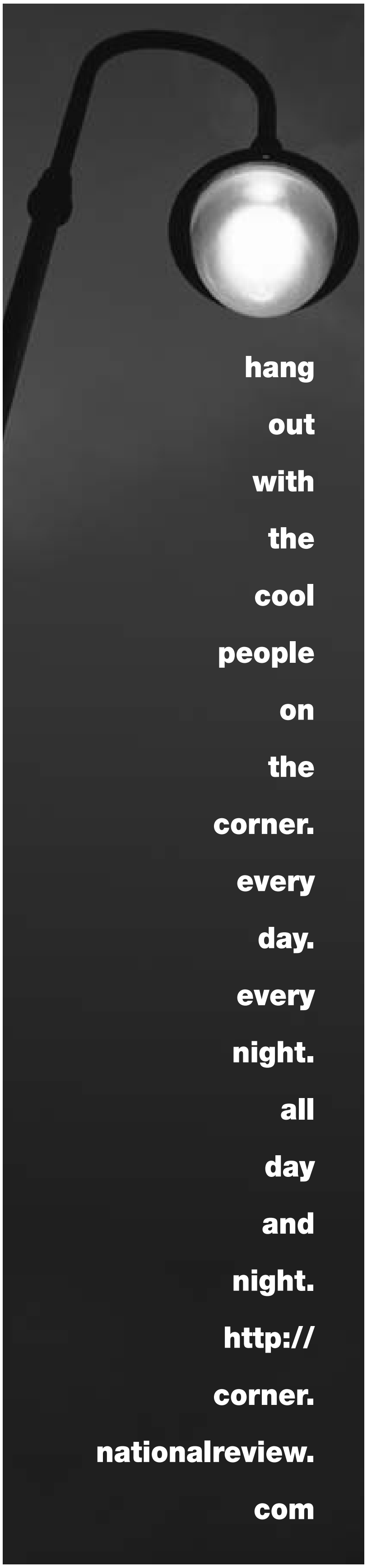

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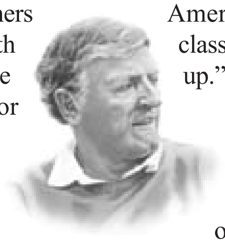
WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

Jobs, Trade, and the Democrats

NEW YORK, AUGUST 21

Did you know—better, would you have guessed?—that the top income-tax rate in India, which is the home of breast-fed socialism, is a mere 30 percent? That is down from 60 percent in 1979. How does that compare? Well, in the United Kingdom it is down from 83 percent in 1979 to 40 percent today; in the United States, from 70 to 35. In all three cases, it has been cut roughly in half.

But not all the economic news is good, and we hear, especially from upward-bound Democratic leaders, about the loss of manufacturing jobs for American workers. This is attributable, of course, to a variety of causes, some entirely bad (lax immigration laws), others good in themselves though with bad side effects (free trade, the decline in the power of the labor unions).



In fact, in the last dozen or so years (1992–2005), U.S. manufacturing jobs have dropped by 20 percent. In Japan and Germany the drop in such jobs is comparable. Alan Reynolds, in his masterly study *Income and Wealth*, unpacks some of the assumptions. "Anxiety about de-industrialization or downsizing is usually linked to international trade through catch-words like 'globalization' or 'offshoring,'" Reynolds writes. "The United States is widely imagined to have 'exported jobs' to countries that export more than they import, such as Japan and Germany, even though manufacturing employment declined even more dramatically in those countries where overall job growth has been abysmal."

How to cope with all the thunder about U.S. trade policies? Since Japan and Germany have run chronic trade surpluses for many years, Reynolds notes, statistics showing greater loss of manufacturing jobs in those countries than in the U.S. "contradict all trade-related explanations for the (unproven) belief the United States has long been suffering wage stagnation or increasing wage inequality."

It is illuminating to learn that wage-earners in manufacturing in the United States take in less than wage-earners in other spheres. Those who work in utilities take in on average $27 per hour; in education, $17; in manufacturing, $16.

U.S. manufacturing jobs have been lost through automation, but this is so in every major industrial economy. The question to ask is: Have those who have lost employment on that account found jobs elsewhere? The answer is that yes, it is so in the United States, where a large number of those who have lost their jobs in manufacturing have moved to higher-skilled, higher-paying jobs in service industries. "As we discovered with the 'vanishing middle class,'" Reynolds points out, "a rising percentage of American families left the middle class manufacturing jobs by moving up."

Income and Wealth (published by Greenwood Press) is stunning in its revelations and its deflations of popular Democratic superstitions. On page 203, for example, Reynolds lists the most popular superstitions of the derogating class, including the assertions that 80 percent to 90 percent of U.S. households have experienced no increase in real income for 25 years, and that only the top 1 percent to 10 percent have received any significant benefits from the growth of productivity.

"Not one of those statements is even remotely close to being true," Reynolds writes. "It is difficult to imagine how so many of the nation's leading economic journalists and economists claim to believe not just one or two of these incredible ideas, but the entire package."

Reynolds, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, is an economist of acute precision. For years he has defended the capitalist way of doing things, and this volume is a high tribute to his championship of basic American ideas.

Is Epiphany Running For Office?

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 7

This is the season in which, quite obviously, lascivious ears tune up for hypocrisy on the part of politicians. More often than not the scorn is justified. It can't be a surprise that politicians seeking public office will adopt positions that, they calculate, will most appeal to the voters. And it is to be expected that, if a politician changes his stance on an issue, critics will judge the changed position as being opportunistic and insincere.

Okay. But the focus this morning is on public figures whose views have actually changed. How are they to be received? With perpetual suspicion and distrust?

An arrant example is in the news, namely the reaction by columnist Gail Collins of the *New York Times* to a statement by Mitt Romney during the debate of Republican contenders for the presidency. Romney was elected governor of Massachusetts in 2002, and his views were pretty widely known as pro-choice. Here is the narrative as it appeared in Ms. Collins's critique: "Nothing changed until he was safely in the governor's office in 2003, and began to veto every single expansion of abortion rights that hit his desk. Then he announced that he had experienced a change of heart while studying the issue of embryonic cloning, and no longer believed that abortion was a matter best left to the individual's conscience. 'I changed my mind. I took the same course that Ronald Reagan took, and I said I was wrong and changed my mind and said I'm pro-life.'"

Now look at what Governor Romney ran into. The critic took a very high dive from the ladder of scorn.

"The best we can hope for is that in the quiet of his motel room after a night of campaigning, Mitt Romney brushes his teeth, says his prayers, and sadly tells himself that you have to be one whopping hypocrite to get to be governor of Massachusetts and a Republican presidential nominee in the same lifetime. If not, if he thinks he has achieved a complete mid-career, all-expenses-paid moral do-over, then we are in really big trouble."

The difficulty here is the planted axiom, which is that one can’t move from a position backing choice, to one backing life, except for venal reasons. But there is left open the question: What if the candidate whose mind has changed is absolutely sincere?

I thought to take an American issue about which we would now say that only a single position can responsibly be held, namely human slavery. I wondered: How was it possible that many Americans could find themselves settling down to life in a democratic polity whose public thought was anchored to a bill of rights and yet condone slavery?

I did not want to tax my own polemical resources on that one, and so I went to the Internet and discovered something called “Teacher Created Resources, Inc.” Collected here are arguments useful to student speakers when assigned a debate topic. I found a page headed “Anti-Slavery Speech,” instructing students on how to present the argument against slavery—and the opposite argument, for slavery. For slavery? Yes.

“Many Southerners and slave owners were in favor of the institution of slavery. The idea that slavery might be abolished was very frightening to the Southerners. Write a speech that is persuasive in justifying slavery.

“. . . Use background information from the perspective of a master who owns slaves.

“. . . State the advantages of slavery to the economy of the South. List the conditions that slaves live under on your plantation.

“. . . Discuss the benefits that the slaves and the white Southern economy will experience because of slavery.”

We have to imagine that there were public men in the age we speak of who, giving thought to slavery, walked into an epiphany of the kind Governor Romney claims to have walked into in the matter of abortion. Early utterances by Abraham Lincoln were ambiguous in the matter of slavery, and, of course, the principal draftsman of the Bill of Rights was a slave owner.

Isn’t it an obligation of some kind, in a society that yields to public discourse for judgments on the law, to permit a contender for high office to change his mind on basic issues without incurring the charge of hypocrite or opportunist?

Iraq: One More Time

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 11

NOT enough attention has been paid, on the Iraq question, to the factor of universal access to information. For many years, in many wars, news reporters could not get near the front-line scene. And where high politics were concerned and dictators held sway, newsmen—and foreign diplomats—not only were stymied, they were deliberately misled.

Restraints on visiting newsmen nowadays are mostly composed with a view to security—not of the United States or of Iraq, but of the newsmen. It is undoubtedly true that a reporter can’t with total confidence walk down the main street of Baghdad. But it is almost certainly true that, were he to do so, he would not come upon any evidence of U.S. or Iraqi deception. Of U.S.-Iraqi ignorance—yes. If we knew the location of every al-Qaeda enclave, we have ten times the firepower and the technology to uproot it.

Now this is a factor of critical importance in the days ahead, when the future of Iraq will be decided. We have in Washington an extraordinary political situation. The formal authority is in the hands of the executive branch, which is conducting the war, and the legislative branch. The jurisdictions are not always clear. Yes, the executive could simply call off the war—nobody would need to be importuned for permission to reach such a decision. And of course, Congress could appropriate the whole gold reserve and designate it for use in the war. But actually to do so would require the cooperation of the executive. That’s where authority over the generals and the corporals and the bazookas resides.

The widening division hasn’t anything to do with data officially withheld. It has entirely to do with analyses and extrapolations. The individual senators and congressmen who will be voting on the critical questions in the days ahead aren’t in any relevant sense better informed or worse informed than the White House.

Our gifted ambassador, Ryan Crocker, summarized it this way in his testimony to Congress: If we stay on, there is a fair chance of success. If we pull away, there is a certainty of chaos.

“Al-Qaeda,” Mr. Crocker reported, “overplayed its hand in al-Anbar, and Anbaris began to reject its excesses—be they beheading school children or cutting off people’s fingers as punishment for smoking.” But Congress doesn’t have to view life under al-Qaeda to ingest the meaning of life under Saddam Hussein and his successors. The members of Congress do not doubt the testimony of Ambassador Crocker for the very good reason that it corresponds with what they know from their own experiences or from the writings of newsmen in whom they have confidence.

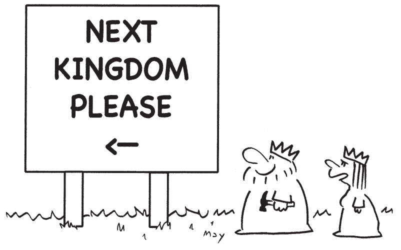
So this is not a case where Congress should defer to the executive on the grounds that the executive knows best. The executive here knows nothing that is not universally known. What matters, before the votes are cast, is relative assessments. Is Crocker correct in postulating that the departure of America from Iraq would mean the ascendancy of Iran in the region? And if that were to happen, how catastrophic would the repercussions be?

Here Congress, using the judgment of its own members, needs to tax itself in order to vote not its conscience, exactly. To vote to sustain the huge effort we began in 2003 when the executive—ambiguously encouraged by the legislature—decided on war. Those congressmen who, if they had it to do again, would vote as they did before could swell the ranks of the Libertarian party.

And of course U.S. elections are around the corner. And there are voters who are not persuaded by the analysis of Ambassador Crocker, or those of American newsmen. And this is of course the final branch of government: the voters. Will they understand if you do? And if you don’t?

If the vote were mine, I’d say: Stick it out. You can’t, by doing so, be accused of thoughtlessness, certainly not of perfidy.

—UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



“That *won’t keep illegals out!*”

happy **warrior**

MARK STEYN

Howdy, Partner

Did you know that golfers no longer have "partners"? My colleague Jay Nordlinger noted the other day that sporting commentators have abandoned the term "playing partner" in favor of the phrase "fellow competitor." I'm no expert in the lingo of the links, but I wonder if it's not because the word "partner" is doing yeoman service in so many other capacities. I used generally to assume it referred to one's business partner: You'd be at a social event in Chicago, and Sears would say, "Do you know my partner Roebuck?" No worries that he might be referring to his . . . well, I was going to say "sleeping partner," but there's another expression that's fallen into disuse.

Anyway, times change. As far as I can tell, "partner" now refers more to pleasure than to business, though with an interesting geographic divide. In America, it seems to refer to a partner of the gay persuasion, while in Britain and Europe a "partner" is generally a heterosexual consort. This isn't because America is gayer than the Continent, but because hardly anyone in Europe gets married these days. If you go to a dinner party in North London, it's full of middle-aged people with partners. I pluck at random from a couple recent issues of the *Daily Telegraph*:

"When my partner and I returned from holiday . . ."

"My partner is about to lose her car-parking permit at Leeds General Infirmary . . ."

"Half of adult women say sleep deprivation has put their relationship under strain, with one in 10 almost splitting from their partner as a result of the problems it causes . . ."

"She is survived by her partner . . ."

"A favourite jumper, bought for me by my former partner . . ."

(A "jumper" is a sweater, not an especially energetic partner.) A friend of mine in London had a partner (male) whom she split up with but kept as her business partner until she got a new business partner (female) who subsequently became her non-business partner, too. You can see why the PGA is reluctant to add to the confusion.

Millions of Britons have decided they're happy to live together without benefit of clergy, if you'll pardon the expression. Had Ségolène Royal prevailed against M. Sarkozy in the recent election, she would have been the first French president with a First Partner. True, what's acceptable at the Elysée Palace is not, for the moment, acceptable at Rideau Hall in Ottawa: A couple of years back, Adrienne Clarkson was appointed Governor-General, the Queen's viceregal representative and the highest office any Canadian can attain. In the weeks before the official announcement, she and her "long-term partner," the philosopher John Ralston Saul, were quietly married. But I wonder if that would be required of the next vicereine. Statistics Canada recently revealed that in 2006, for the first time since the census began, a majority of adult Canadians—51 percent—were unmarried. Since 2001, common-law relationships have increased by almost 20 percent, single-parent households by 8 percent, same-sex couples by over 30 percent.

Hollywood devotes a lot of energy to promoting "alternative families": Even the animated blockbuster *Ice Age* was full of a lot of labored dialogue about how the mammoth, the sloth, and the saber-toothed tiger were an alternative herd. But you can't help noticing that in Canada and Europe what the numbers show, as the *Vancouver Sun*'s Pete McMartin put it, is not that the family is changing but that the family is dying. Here's another all-time record: 27 percent of Canadian households have just one person in them—which is three times as many as households of five or more (8.7 percent). "Five or more" sounds pretty crowded but, in fact, it's Mom, Dad, and three kids—or what back in the despised conformist Fifties we would have called "the norm." As Dean Martin sang:

Then add the wedding bells
One house where lovers dwell
Three little kids for the flavor . . .

In Canada, the bells are silent, the three-kid houses are down to 8.7 percent, and I'd be interested to know how much actual lovin' that 27 percent of single-occupancy pads are seeing. The norm is no longer normal. And, indeed, even in those three-kid homes, it may not be the pitter-patter of tiny feet you're hearing: 58 percent of Torontonians in their twenties still live in the parental home, as the Western world does its best to extend adolescence well into middle age. Like Italy and Germany, Canada has a surfeit of 30-year-old children but a shortage of three-year-old ones.

When the family dies, the nation follows: We've all seen heartwarming Hollywood movies about plucky waitress moms struggling to do the best for their kids against the odds. But that's the point: It's against the odds. In Britain, a quarter of all children are being raised by single parents—which is to say a lot of them aren't being raised at all, which is why many a quaint old English market town transforms after dusk into a desolate dystopia preyed on by packs of feral 14-year-olds. And, as always, it's easier to fall into the hole than to climb out. The Scottish journalist Andrew Neil recently pointed out that, in Glasgow, government spending now accounts for 70 percent of GDP, and in the poorest part of the city life is nasty, brutish, and as short as in the Third World. Male life expectancy in North Korea: 60 years; Bangladesh: 58; Yemen: 57; Gabon: 55; Calton, Scotland: 54 years. Middle-aged Torontonians live with their parents but middle-aged Glaswegians live with their ancestors.

This is what you might call trickle-down morality: In the space of 40 years, the middle class abolished "living in sin" and embraced "long-term partners," and the working class stopped worrying about "broken homes" and accepted the sociological designation of "alternative families." And reversing it will take a lot more than targeted tax breaks and entitlements: It's the stupidity, economists. **NR**

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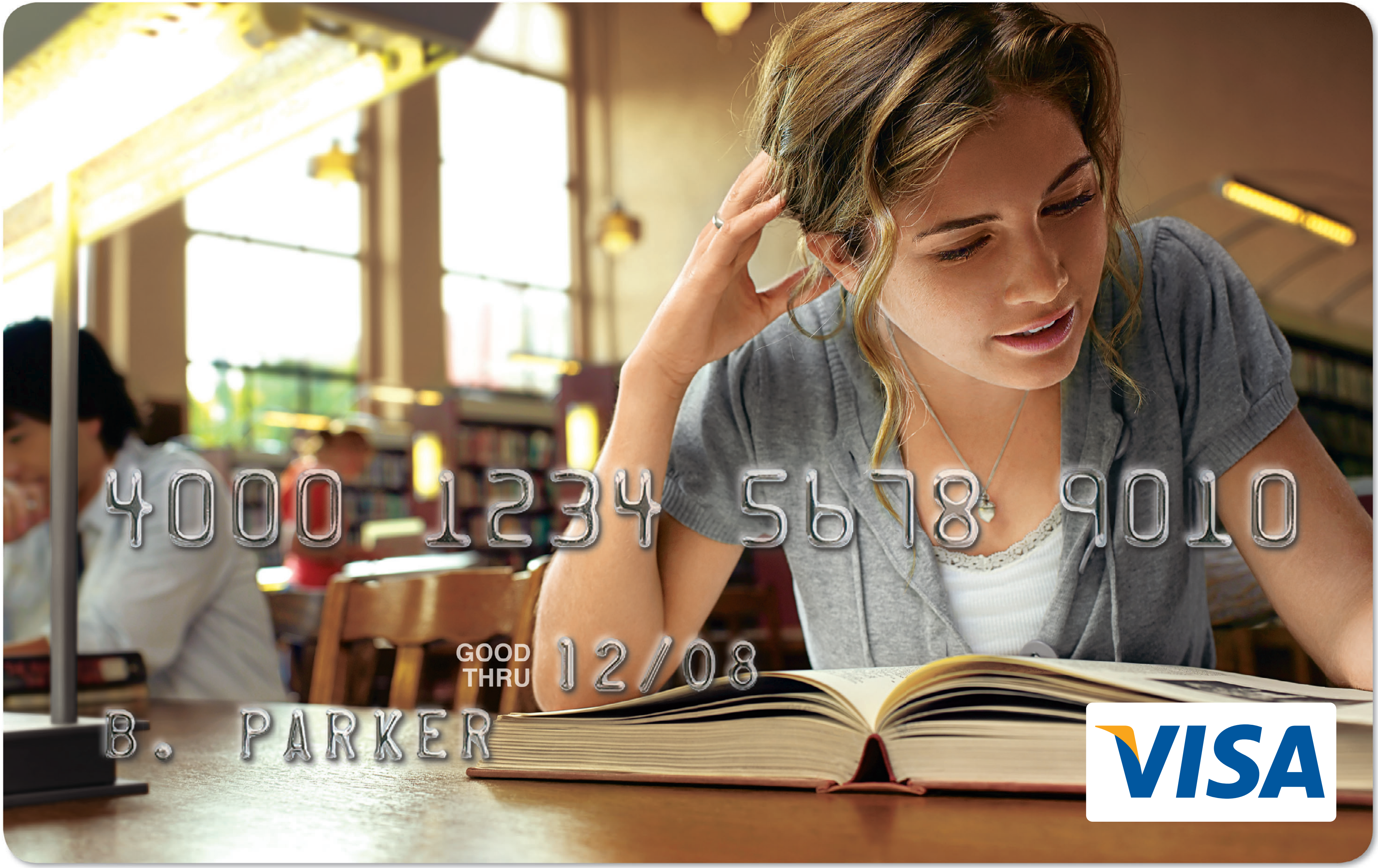

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